

# JOHN WHO SAW

*a layman's essay on the authorship  
of the fourth Gospel  
by*

A. H. N. GREEN-ARMYTAGE

'He that hath seen hath borne witness, and  
his witness is true: and he knoweth that he  
saith true, that ye also may believe.'

(John xix, 35.)

'Was John at all? And did he say he saw?  
Assure us, ere we ask what he might see.'

(BROWNING, *A Death in the Desert.*)

FABER AND FABER LIMITED

24 Russell Square

London

*First published in mcmlii  
by Faber and Faber Limited  
24 Russell Square London W.C.1  
Printed in Great Britain by  
Latimer Trend & Co Ltd Plymouth  
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## PREFACE

I have to express my gratitude to Prof. R. H. Lightfoot and to the Right Rev. Dom Christopher Butler for their helpful advice and suggestions. Neither of them, however, bears any responsibility for the statements made or opinions expressed in the following pages.

In the choice of an English version for Scriptural quotations I have allowed myself a certain freedom. Longer quotations are generally from Mgr. Knox's translation, which seems to me the best of the modern ones, but no single version is wholly satisfactory in all contexts, and I have therefore considered myself free to use the older versions, or to make my own from the Greek, according to circumstances. The important thing is that the version should be an adequate rendering into English of the best available Greek text, and this rule I have endeavoured to observe.

In order to avoid a plethora of footnotes, I have concentrated all references to the works of modern writers in an Index of References at the end of the book, and have added a short 'Who's Who' in an appendix.

*Bath, March 1951*

A.H.N.G.-A.

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# I

## INTRODUCTORY

Some apology is due, I think, from anyone who sets out to write yet another book on the subject of St. John the Evangelist, and a special apology is needed when the author holds not even a degree, much less a chair, in Divinity or Theology and has never been admitted to Holy Orders, even of the most minor kind. What business (the learned may naturally ask) has this fellow to hold any views upon the matter at all, or to arrogate to himself the right to sit in judgement upon me, who have given my life to the study of these subjects? But I must remind the learned reader (if any learned man should happen to read this book) that learned counsel and still more learned judges do habitually submit to the verdict of a jury, as the most eminent and expert statesmen submit not only their opinions but their whole careers to the verdict of an unlearned electorate, and it is in the explicit capacity of a jurymen or 'floating voter' that I have ventured to write this book.

This answer to the learned is also an answer to the unlearned reader, whose complaint is merely that there is



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already an abundance of books upon the fourth Gospel, for I have observed, in reading some of these, that they are overwhelmingly the work of counsel for the plaintiff or the defendant—of spokesmen on the radical or conservative benches. The juryman, or the voter, is conspicuous by his absence. Few laymen, in the broad sense of the term, have touched upon the matter at all. Sir Frederick Kenyon (a scholar, but not primarily a biblical critic) has written briefly on the Johannine question in *The Bible and Modern Scholarship*. Mr. Bernard Shaw, in the preface to *Androcles*, has touched the subject with both wit and shrewdness, and the historian Lord Charnwood has written a valuable book entitled *According to St. John*. But, for the rest, the literature of this problem has been written mainly by clergymen, university professors and the like who are, indeed, well qualified by their scholarship to set forth the evidence in the case but less well qualified, it sometimes seems to me, to find a verdict upon it.

It is not easy to describe what I mean without seeming to be offensive and perhaps unjust. Let me put it in this way. There is a world—I do not say a world in which all scholars live but one at any rate into which all of them sometimes stray, and which some of them seem permanently to inhabit—which is not the world in which I live. In my world, if *The Times* and the *Telegraph* both tell one story in somewhat different terms, nobody concludes that one of them must have copied the other, nor that the variations in the story have some esoteric significance. But in that world of which I am speaking this would be taken for granted. There, no story is ever derived from facts but always from somebody else's version of the same story.

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*Writers of books need earlier books as sources when they write 'em.*  
*Those earlier books, yet earlier books, and so ad infinitum.*

In my world, almost every book, except some of those produced by Government departments, is written by one author. In that world almost every book is produced by a committee, and some of them by a whole series of committees. In my world, if I read that Mr. Churchill, in 1935, said that Europe was heading for a disastrous war, I applaud his foresight. In that world no prophecy, however vaguely worded, is ever made except after the event. In my world we say, 'The first world war took place in 1914-1918'. In that world they say, 'The world-war narrative took shape in the third decade of the twentieth century'. In my world men and women live for a considerable time—seventy, eighty, even a hundred years—and they are equipped with a thing called memory. In that world (it would appear) they come into being, write a book, and forthwith perish, all in a flash, and it is noted of them with astonishment that they 'preserve traces of a primitive tradition' about things which happened well within their own adult lifetime.

Turning to more detailed matters, in my world, if a fisherman makes an unusually good catch, he counts and weighs and measures each fish and can accurately (even maddeningly) recall these statistics to memory until the end of his life. In that world a 'draught of 153 great fishes' is necessarily fictitious and the number must be symbolical. In my world, if a party of uneducated and probably superstitious men is sent out by moonlight to arrest a man who is said to be in league with the devil and to be able to work miracles, they go in some trepi-

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dation; and when the wizard suddenly appears out of the darkness and challenges them, using those words so awe-inspiring to Jewish ears, 'I AM', they are apt to be considerably taken aback. But in that other world it is 'ludicrously unhistorical' to suppose that the high priest's servants 'went back and fell to the ground' in precisely these circumstances. In my world a man of even the humblest origin can become, by the end of his life, a very learned man. In that world a Galilean fisherman can never, as long as he lives, become acquainted with the writings of Philo or the terminology of contemporary religious and philosophical thought.

It would be grossly unjust to suggest that all scholars, or even a majority of scholars, live permanently in this world of their own. Many (Bishop Lightfoot was a shining example) combine a ruthless exactitude in the counting and weighing of every grain of evidence with a profound insight into its significance and a kind of consummate generalship in forming the scattered fragments into an ordered and intelligible pattern. Broadly speaking, this sort of greatness in scholars always goes hand in hand with a wide general culture. It is the narrow specialist, in any department of knowledge, who is sometimes led into absurdities by his tendency to ignore or despise any source of knowledge which lies outside the restricted field of his own expertise. Readers of Mr. Balchin's novel, *A Small Back Room*, may remember the statistician who discovered a close correlation between Roman Catholicism and weight-lifting ability, or the mathematician who proved that every seventh round from a new type of gun had a *negative* muzzle-velocity—and both were very hurt when people laughed. Similar feats of ingenuity are not unknown in the sphere of bib-

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lical criticism and have sometimes been amusingly parodied. Mgr Ronald Knox, for instance, has proved that Queen Victoria wrote *In Memoriam* and has deduced various other absurdities from an analysis of the scriptural quotations in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Sir W. M. Ramsay, too (in *Luke the Physician*), once retorted very neatly to some arguments of Harnack by subjecting Harnack's own book to the same sort of microscopic scrutiny that Harnack had applied to St. Luke, with results which were as unflattering to the German scholar as his had been to the author of *Acts*. Not that anyone would call Harnack a narrow specialist. He was one of the great scholars of our time. But even he was not immune from the common academic weakness (to which Germans, for some reason, seem especially prone) of treating books as if they were phenomena of nature and leaving out of account the most elementary facts of human psychology. It is as if a man were to form the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle into a pattern undreamed of by the wildest surrealist and then congratulate himself on having solved the puzzle because the pieces did approximately fit together mechanically.

Once any controversy has started, of course, partisanship at once enters into the thing. We hear of conservative scholars, of liberal or radical critics. The words left-wing and right-wing are bandied about, and men are commended for maintaining a middle-of-the-road position. Unhappily, too, an *odium theologicum* broods over the scene. There is, in fact, such a deal of wishful thinking—on both sides—in all that pertains to N.T. criticism, and such a fog of war hangs over the whole territory that I should need to be rash indeed if I were to join in any part of the general engagement.



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Fortunately, however, there is one corner of the battlefield where the smoke seems at last to be dispersing, the dust of controversy settling. I mean, the question of the authorship of the Gospel according to St. John. Not that peace has been declared nor any agreement signed. Not that, by any means. The traditional garrison is still strong and its fortifications have survived all sappers. Nor have the besiegers abandoned the siege. But at the moment they are not pressing it. They are, as it were, looking the other way and suggesting, by their attitude, that it does not really matter who occupies the citadel. In this calmer air an unlearned layman may, perhaps, like a war correspondent, safely explore the field and express his views about the past, present and probable future course of the campaign.

As regards the past, there was undoubtedly a 'Johannine problem' in patristic times. The statement that St. John the Apostle did not write the fourth Gospel was first made, it seems, in the second century, and controversy about the Apocalypse went on much later than that. It may have been ominous for the future course of the war that these first shots in it were fired mainly on grounds of doctrinal prejudice, not of lofty, disinterested scholarship. But so far as the Gospel was concerned the controversy was short-lived, and from the end of the second century the position of St. John was never challenged within the Catholic Church. Throughout the Middle Ages, in both East and West, the New Testament canon stood unchallenged, and the traditional account of its origin was taken for granted, the controversies of those times being carried on in the sphere of philosophy and metaphysics, not of biblical criticism.

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A change came at the Reformation. Then, the virtual rediscovery of the Greek New Testament by Western Christians concentrated men's attention upon that book to an extraordinary degree. In the Protestant countries, in fact, Biblical study nearly replaced dogmatic Theology altogether, and Protestantism was in danger of becoming, like Islam, the religion of a book. But Europeans are incapable of concentrating their attention upon any subject without criticizing and arguing about it, and it was not long before this spirit got to work upon the Bible. It concerned itself first with the text. As more ancient MSS came to light it was found that the Received Text of the printed editions was imperfect, and efforts to restore the original text began in the seventeenth century. They are still proceeding. Another line of study was 'harmonization'—the attempt to construct a continuous, coherent narrative out of the four Gospels. The difficulty of achieving this result convincingly, without sacrificing the doctrine of the verbal inspiration and total infallibility of Scripture, was naturally great. The Bible Christian, brought up to believe that the Gospels had been virtually dictated by the Holy Ghost, was ill prepared to cope with the advance of rationalism, deism and the Enlightenment.

This storm gathered in the eighteenth century. It broke in the nineteenth. Anything miraculous, even phenomena now well recognized as falling vaguely into the power-of-mind-over-matter category, was then considered impossible and absurd. Therefore the Gospels were late and mainly legendary compositions. Moreover, the work of Charles Darwin had a most baneful effect upon the whole nineteenth-century way of thought. Because in the field of biology there seemed to

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have been a gradual evolution from simpler to more complex forms of life, the Victorians disastrously concluded that what was true of natural history must also be true of human history, with the improvement that whereas nature moved from simpler to more complex, human nature moved from worse to better. Thus was born the doctrine of Progress—slow, but quite inevitable and beneficent Progress. In spite of all the evidence of history, which abounds in great saints and great scoundrels who have built, destroyed, or distorted whole societies and empires, they insisted on their doctrine of Man's gradual but inevitable upward march. And since Christianity was a step in that march it must have come into existence gradually. Not with a bang but a slithering glide. That the Gospel Narrative had Evolved was a thing taken for granted, and it became merely a question of determining the steps of that evolution—of digging up the Neanderthal bones of it, and measuring its cranial capacity.

This work was by no means without value, but it led to some false conclusions. For instance, it led to the conclusion that all the Gospels were written quite late in the second century, an hypothesis now quite disproved. It also led to an exaggerated preference for St. Mark. For reasons which need not be examined here, the majority of critics concluded that St. Mark's Gospel was the first to be written and was therefore more reliable than the others. As if seeking a home for that verbal inspiration which they could no longer attribute to all four Gospels, many scholars began to attribute something like infallibility to Mark alone, and concluded that John, who least resembles Mark, must be the least reliable of all. This opinion, too, has been very much modified in

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recent years. At one time, indeed, something like a contrary opinion was held. It was not John's independence that condemned him but his dependence. Canon Streeter, for example, maintained that he had used the earlier Gospel as a source, and could not therefore be a first-hand witness himself. This view, in its turn, has now fallen out of favour, and there are even a few critics who to-day assert that St. John had not even read St. Mark—nor any other Gospel.

Meanwhile, through all the turns and twists of criticism, a stalwart succession of very able scholars has continued to uphold the traditional authorship of St. John the Apostle. They have many notable victories to their credit and can claim with justice that every new discovery, literary or archaeological, made in the past hundred years has always proved favourable to their side, never to that of their opponents.<sup>1</sup> John's alleged anachronisms and topographical errors have been disproved by archaeology. The *Diatessaron* of Tatian, which testifies to the prestige of the fourth Gospel in the middle of the second century, came dramatically to light just when its very existence was being strenuously denied. Papyrus fragments from Egypt have placed the date of the Gospel firmly back into the first century. The citadel, as I have said, is still untaken and its garrison is in good heart. It is the critics who have ceased to press the siege, and one is tempted to whisper that perhaps the grapes are sour. At all events the fighting seems to have died down. Or, to change the metaphor, we may say that prosecuting and defending counsel have now

<sup>1</sup> 'In the case of John, the whole history of radical criticism is the story of a continual retreat.' Principal Vincent Taylor in the *Hibbert Journal*, July 1950.



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resumed their seats. May not the jury, who have been sitting patiently in their box for over a century, retire to consider the evidence?

But a true verdict give? An unbiased verdict? There lies the rub. A juror is not normally either bosom friend or bitter enemy of the man in the dock. But the fourth Gospel lies so near to the heart of Christianity, and Christianity lies so near the heart of all things, that no man, I believe, can hope to treat it with that cool and callous indifference which befits an impartial judge. His thinking upon such a subject can hardly fail to be wishful thinking, so that he either inclines to favour the reasoning which accords with his own desires, or else leans right over backwards in a conscientious desire to be impartial. It may therefore be advantageous to try to imagine what a cool and callous presiding judge might say in his charge to the jury.

The first thing which he might emphasize is the nature of the problem itself. The question, 'who wrote the fourth Gospel?' is one which is primarily historical, to some extent literary, but to hardly any extent theological. That is to say, the question, 'who wrote it?' and the question, 'is it true?' are not identical, nor even very closely related. A genuine disciple of Jesus might have attributed his own opinions to his master, just as a genuine disciple of Socrates did in the dialogues of Plato, out of piety to his master's memory. Conversely, a man who was not a disciple of Jesus might have written good history about him, just as a modern history of the English civil war might be a better one than Clarendon's. Prejudices for or against the theological content of the Gospel should therefore be laid aside. We are not asked to agree or disagree with the views expressed or

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implied in it but to determine whose they were. Similarly, we should resist a tendency to mutilate the Gospel in order to 'reconcile it with Modern Thought'. To argue that those parts of the book which are credible to modern readers are authentic, and that those which are incredible are unauthentic, is not very logical.

The problem is to some extent a literary one in this sense: if it can be proved, by the methods of literary criticism, that the author was not a Jew, or that he stood in a position of direct literary dependence upon pre-existing works, it would follow that he was *not* a first-hand witness himself, but it would not tell us who he was. Or, if there were some work whose authorship were certainly known, and if literary criticism could identify that author with the fourth evangelist, then we should know who that evangelist was; and similarly if we could disprove such identity of authorship we should know who the evangelist was not. This question does not, however, arise in practice, since there is none of the five Johannine writings whose authorship is unquestioned, and there is little agreement, even, whether all of them were written by the same man. Evidence from this source is therefore somewhat negative but may, for all that, be valuable.

But the problem is fundamentally an historical one and should be approached as such. Now almost any statement in any history book is open to contradiction by somebody. Historical 'facts' are seldom the sort of facts which are susceptible of rigorous proof. If we say, for instance, that Queen Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII it is always open to somebody to object that she may have been illegitimate. But in practice we accept the text-books of history with considerable, and

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justified, confidence. No doubt many statements made by historians are to some extent precarious, but unless we have strong reason to suppose the historian to be biased to the point of self-deception we recognize that he has probably weighed the available evidence with care and intelligence and that his conclusions are therefore to be relied on. It may seem frivolous to cite a detective novel in this context, but in one of her novels Miss Dorothy Sayers sets forth the principles which should govern this sort of judgements with such admirable clarity that I make no apology for quoting her. It is a judge who is directing a jury in the attitude they should adopt towards circumstantial evidence, and Miss Sayers makes him speak as follows: 'You may perhaps wish to hear from me exactly what is meant by those words "reasonable doubt". They mean, just so much doubt as you might have in everyday life about an ordinary matter of business. . . . They do not mean that you must cast about for fantastical solutions of what seems to you plain and simple. They do not mean those nightmare doubts which sometimes torment us at four o'clock in the morning when we have not slept very well. They only mean that the proof must be such as you would accept about a plain matter of buying and selling, or some such commonplace transaction.'

The present writer hopes that he may be able to follow the excellent advice which he has given himself in the foregoing paragraphs, but being human he cannot hope to be without some prejudices of his own. These will, no doubt, make themselves apparent in the succeeding chapters—if indeed they have not already done so. To some people, the fact that a belief has been held for eighteen centuries is enough to damn it as false; to

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others, that fact canonizes its truth. Neither attitude is strictly logical, but to one or other of them all men, I believe, incline. For myself, I admit to an inclination towards the latter of them. I am one who prefers to believe that Sir Richard Whittington did have a pet cat. At the same time I should not feel gravely disillusioned if some alternative explanation of the legend were proved true. So, in this matter of the fourth Gospel I can promise that I will try to weigh the evidence honestly and without bias, but I cannot, any more than any other man, promise that I shall succeed.

## II

### THE TEXT

**B**efore studying the content of any ancient book it is as well to examine the channels by which it has traversed the centuries to our own time, so as to determine as far as possible the reliability of our printed editions and the fidelity with which they reproduce the original sentences of the author. To-day, an author can pass a set of page-proofs to the printer and know with certainty that each printed copy will be exactly like all others in that edition. But printing was only invented in the fifteenth century. Before that, each copy of a book had to be written out by hand. Vellum came into general use in the fourth century. Before that, books were normally written on papyrus—a material less durable even than modern paper. Thus, between the author's original copy and the earliest copy still surviving there is an unknown number of intervening generations of manuscripts, each liable to corruption by copyists' errors.

The normal method of producing a book in Roman times was this: the author dictated to a stenographer

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who prepared a fair copy. This copy, no doubt, was then revised and corrected until a final 'press copy' was produced. This was then taken to a publisher whose staff of professional scribes proceeded to multiply copies of it for sale. In the absence of any law of copyright there was nothing to prevent a 'pirated' edition being made from any of the copies sold by the original publisher, and in any case these copies would become the only source for subsequent editions of the book as soon as the author's autograph MS had perished. The normal format of a book was the papyrus roll. Imagine the pages of this book as being printed on one side of the paper only and not bound together but pasted side by side in a long strip, and this strip rolled up on staves of wood or bone, and you have a very fair picture of what a Roman book was like.

The sacred books of Christianity, however, were not always produced in normal circumstances nor in a normal way. They often had to be written, copied and circulated in haste and secrecy. The copyists were, as often as not, enthusiastic amateurs rather than professional scribes, and it seems, too, that even quite early in the second century they preferred the codex—that is, a book like a modern one of bound-up sheets—and this, when made of papyrus, would be a more perishable format.

For these reasons the earliest copies of the N.T. writings were exposed to a more-than-average risk of corruption, and there were other circumstances which tended to have the same effect:

(i) Their rate of mortality was greater than that of contemporary Greek or Latin classics. The frequent persecutions led to frequent destruction of Christian writings.



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(ii) The number of copies produced was greater. Not only because existing copies were more frequently destroyed but because Christianity spread through the Empire very rapidly, and the demand for copies of the N.T. would have been considerably greater than the demand, say, for Juvenal or Tacitus.

(iii) The four Gospels tell much the same story, often in very similar words. This led to a special form of corruption called 'harmonistic', when the scribe, consciously or unconsciously, adjusted the text of, say, Luke to agree with that of Mark or Matthew. This sort of error, however, would be less likely to occur in the fourth Gospel than in the other three.

The raw material of our N.T. text, therefore, was in its early days subjected to special dangers which it did not wholly escape; but any shortcomings in quality are compensated for by quantity. Those who have studied in their youth any of the writers of classical antiquity will be familiar with the sort of footnotes called an *apparatus criticus* and with the page headed 'Sigla' whereon a catalogue of the principal manuscripts is set out. But any such reader, when he turns to the *sigla* and *apparatus* of a critical edition of the New Testament, will probably be appalled by what he finds. Whereas most classical authors are preserved to us in a mere handful of MSS, of which the earliest are seldom earlier than the Middle Ages, the N.T. is preserved in over 2,000 MSS of which a considerable number are over 1,000 years old and several date from Roman times. In addition to these Greek MSS there are a number of translations into Latin, Syriac, Coptic and so on, and over 1,500 lectionaries in which passages from the Bible for use in public worship are collected. Furthermore, the early Christian

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writers quote copiously and often at great length from copies of the N.T. known to them and there is a Harmony of the Gospels called the *Diatessaron*, made in the third quarter of the second century, in which the four Gospels are sewn together into one continuous narrative. Thus the apparatus and catalogue of MSS in a full critical edition of the N.T. are of enormous bulk compared with those of the classical authors.

To English readers, the N.T. is known mainly in three forms (if we ignore modern translations). These are, in chronological order, The Rheims or Douai Bible of 1582 (used by Roman Catholics), the Authorized Version or King James Bible of 1611, and the Revised Version of 1881. All these have slight but perceptible differences, due sometimes to the translator but more often to differences in the Greek text underlying the translation. The Rheims version was made from the Latin Vulgate, that is, from the Latin translation made for the Pope by St. Jerome in the late fourth century. The Authorized Version was made from a Greek text based mainly upon late and inferior Byzantine MSS, and the Revised Version was made from a superior Greek text derived from much more ancient and authoritative sources than any available in 1611. Considered simply as literature, the A.V. has a superiority which few would dispute, but from the scholar's point of view it is perhaps the least satisfactory of the three; for the R.V. translates an undoubtedly better Greek text, and the Vulgate (which the Rheims version translates) was made by a first-rate scholar who had access to the great libraries of Alexandria and Caesarea fifteen centuries ago. None of these versions, however, can be perfect. Nor can any Greek text printed to-day hope to

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reproduce with perfect accuracy the exact words of the original authors. What it can do, nevertheless, is to give a much more surely grounded text, a much closer approximation to the author's original autograph, than does any modern edition of any other ancient writer. No classical poet or historian, not even Vergil, is so well or so copiously preserved to us as are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Modern scholars divide the authorities—MSS, Versions, patristic quotations, etc.—into three or four main groups, the most important of these being the group headed by the two imposing MSS, codex Vaticanus and codex Sinaiticus. This group is variously called Neutral or Alexandrian or Hesychian and is believed to represent the text used and approved by Origen, one of the greatest biblical scholars of all time. (He was born in 185 and died in about 254). Both these great codices date from the fourth century and were believed by Westcott and Hort—the scholars whose views carried most weight with the revisers of 1881—to be outstandingly superior to all other witnesses.

Another large group of MSS—by far the largest, in fact, so far as numbers go—is called Syrian or Byzantine or Koiné and is represented in the main by the 'Received Text' as printed in the sixteenth century by Erasmus, Stephanus and others and translated into English by the Authorized Version. The principal MS in this group, so far as the Gospels are concerned, is codex Alexandrinus, a fifth-century MS presented by the Byzantine Patriarch to James I, and now, with Sinaiticus, in the British Museum. This Received Text is almost universally considered to be later than the others and to be a revision, made perhaps by Lucian of An-

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tioc in the late third century, which became standardized in the Byzantine Church.

All authorities which differed from these two groups but which nevertheless seemed to preserve a very ancient form of text were formerly lumped together under the title 'Western'. The principal MS of this Western group is codex Bezae, a fifth-century Graeco-Latin MS whose place of origin is uncertain but which is closely related to the old pre-Vulgate Latin version and to the early Syriac translation. In the present century, however, certain discoveries and a closer study of the Western text by Streeter, Lake and others, have identified another type of text, distinguishable from both Neutral and Western Groups but equally ancient, which is called Caesarean (because Streeter thought it was used by Origen after his migration to Caesarea) or the Theta Group, after the MS called the Koridethi codex which is assigned the Greek letter Theta in the catalogue of MSS.

The obvious simile in terms of which this textual history is best described is that of a river. We may imagine that in the second half of the first century there welled up a number of springs of water—the original writings of St. Paul, the evangelists and the others whose works appear in our New Testament. For two or three centuries these waters flow through marsh and jungle where we cannot see them, but in the latter part of the fourth century they emerge quite clearly as a single river which is promptly diverted into irrigation channels. One such channel is the Greek text officially approved by the Byzantine Church (English equivalent, the A.V.), another is the Latin Vulgate made by St. Jerome and approved by the Roman Church (English

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equivalent, the Rheims version), and a third is the Syriac Peshitta, made by Rabbula in the early fifth century and approved by the Syriac Church. All this later part of the story is pretty clearly known and understood. It is upon the earlier, jungle-and-marsh, period that the attention of scholars is concentrated.

For the three main streams of water mentioned above—Greek, Latin and Syriac—are found on analysis to be not perfectly consistent in their composition. For instance, the doxology to the Lord's Prayer, 'For thine is the kingdom, etc.', is found in the Byzantine and Syriac but not in the Vulgate; and the latter has 'on Earth peace to men of goodwill' where the former has 'on Earth peace, goodwill towards men'. The question is, which of these discordant traces are impurities, picked up by the water in its passage through the jungle, and which were present in the original springs? And the only way to answer this question is to explore the jungle with the utmost care, analysing every sample of water that can be discovered and comparing these analyses with the water in the main streams.

In spite of the crushing weight of evidence to be sifted, the past century or so has seen a great measure of success attend these efforts. Archaeology has helped by unearthing many important samples from the 'jungle' period. Two MSS of an early Syriac translation have turned up. So have several versions of Tatian's *Diatessaron* (whose very existence was questioned a hundred years ago). For the Greek text itself we now have codex Sinaiticus, the Freer Gospels, codex Theta and several important fragments of much earlier papyrus MSS., while of St. John's Gospel we have papyrus fragments (very small, unfortunately) which were written less than

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fifty years after the author's original copy. Aided by these discoveries, the textual critics have re-examined the later evidence—the minuscule MSS, patristic quotations, etc.—and the result is that the texts which modern scholarship believes it has restored are the texts current not in the fourth but in the second or early third century of our era. The texts, in fact, which were current just about a hundred years after the latest component of the N.T. was written.

The results are interesting and rather curious. At that period the 'Byzantine' text, as Westcott and Hort rightly concluded, did not exist; but (as Westcott and Hort never dreamed of suspecting) it is now doubtful whether their favourite 'Neutral' text had yet emerged. It would appear, in fact, to have been itself a Revised Version—earlier and more scholarly than W. H.'s 'Syrian' but later than the 'Western' text, some form of which seems to have been current in all parts of the Empire in the latter part of the second century. The question naturally arises, were the editors of the 'Neutral' text (working in the great centre of exact textual scholarship, Alexandria) merely revising an already corrupted 'Western' T.R.? Or had they access to very primitive MSS ante-dating the Western text and perhaps ante-dating Marcion? Does their text, in fact, appeal to modern scholars merely because it is the most scholarly or because it is intrinsically the most primitive? But these questions, however fascinating, are beyond my competence to discuss. The interested reader may consult *New Testament Manuscript Studies* (ed. M. M. Parvis and A. P. Wikgren, Chicago, 1950). The points I wish to make are three: first, that by the end of the second century a definitely corrupt form of text, the



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'Western', had established itself and there were considerable variations between the texts current in different parts of Christendom. This argues a longish textual history and the intervention of several generations of MSS between the original writings of the N.T. and the time of Origen. It is this fact which has done as much as anything to explode the idea that the Gospels themselves were not written until late in the second century. To satisfy the textual critic we need to date the composition of the Gospels as early, not as late, as we can.

The second point is this, that the overwhelming majority of those variants by which the critics classify their material are, from the point of view of the average man, quite trivial. They are like those microscopic differences which the philatelist observes in postage stamps but which an ordinary person would never notice. Only a tiny fraction of the N.T. is affected in a way which, for ordinary purposes, can be said to matter. So far as the fourth Gospel is concerned the most important variant is the omission of the so-called *pericope adulterae*, the story of the woman taken in adultery (John vii. 53-viii. 11). The Received Text and the Vulgate both include it. The Syriac versions omit it. Going back to the more primitive texts, we find it in the Western but not in the Alexandrian MSS, while the Theta group is divided in a rather interesting way. Some MSS of this group place it at the end of St. John, as a kind of appendix. Others place it in the third Gospel, after Luke xxi. 38. Most modern scholars agree that the story itself is true but that it does not belong to the authentic text of St. John. Whether it has strayed from St. Luke or whether it got placed in St. John's Gospel because it was derived from St. John's verbal teaching need not be

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discussed here. But simply as a textual variant this *pericope* has a twofold importance. First, because it is the only instance of an important interpolation being made into the primitive text of St. John, and second, because some scholars have conjectured that its length may provide a clue to the number of words on a page of the original text, and have used this clue in attempts to rearrange the sequence of chapter and verse in the Gospel as we have it. This question will be discussed later, in Chapter VIII.

The third point which emerges from all this textual history is this, that our printed texts of St. John are extremely good. The MS tradition is very ancient and, apart from the *pericope adulterae*, very unanimous. As Sir Frederick Kenyon has said, 'No other ancient book has anything like such early and plentiful testimony to its text, and no unbiased scholar would deny that the text which has come down to us is substantially sound'. This fact is of capital importance. Critics of the content of any ancient book are under a powerful temptation to tamper with the text—to write off inconvenient passages as interpolations or to assume that there have been deletions, and generally to fool about with the book as it stands. But the MS evidence gives no grounds at all for such proceedings in the case of the N.T. Where a text is largely corrupted, as our text of Shakespeare is, for example, conjectural emendation may be justified. But even at its best such emendation is only guess-work, and the occasions when some new discovery has cleared up a difficulty by providing the true reading of a formerly corrupt passage have never, I think, been at all flattering to the ingenuity of scholars in this matter of conjectural emendation. The fourth

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Gospel must stand or fall as it is, not as some ingenious modern editor declares it ought to be.

There remains a question which, though not one of textual criticism, is nevertheless allied to it, namely, whether the Gospel is the work of a single author or whether it is, in any sense, a compilation. In the first century it was neither unusual nor disreputable for an author to incorporate into his work large portions taken almost verbatim from other writers. It is clear, for instance, that both Plutarch and the third evangelist did precisely this. The question is, did the fourth? And the almost unanimous reply of scholars is that he did not. E. Schweizer and J. Jeremias have made a minute study of the characteristically Johannine turns of phrase and have found them very evenly distributed throughout the Gospel. Plenty of scholars, it is true, have sought to distinguish different 'sources' which the evangelist is supposed to have employed, and this has led such men as Bultmann, for instance, to wield the scissors most valiantly upon the 'seamless robe' of the Gospel so as to divide it into 'strata'; but the very consistent and very distinctive literary style of the book as a whole compels most even of these source-critics to admit that the evangelist had absorbed and digested and redelivered his material in his own person. This is most clearly seen, for example, in the feeding of the five thousand. John is here describing exactly the same incident as the synoptists but he is unquestionably telling the story 'in his own words'. Prof. Menoud has subjected all the different 'strata' of Bultmann's theory to this test of the Johannine literary characteristics and he has found no stratum which is devoid of them and no characteristic which is peculiar to any one stratum. The Johannine sign-

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manual is present throughout. Canon Streeter, though fully persuaded that the evangelist had used various written sources for his Gospel, admits that it is useless to attempt their unravelling. 'One might as well (he says) take a string of sausages and hope to reconstruct the pig.' In fact, and in short, the fourth Gospel is a perfectly normal book written in a perfectly normal way.

Finally, and briefly, we must consider the other writings which tradition assigns to the same author—the three epistles and the Apocalypse. Are they in fact by the same author or not? As regards the epistles there is to-day a near approach to unanimity among scholars of all schools: Gospel and epistles are from the same hand. It is true that the weighty authority of Prof. C. H. Dodd can be cited for the opposite opinion, but very few have followed him in this, the majority maintaining that the similarities between Gospel and epistles, in both style and thought, greatly outweigh the alleged differences. The question has been well treated by Dr. A. E. Brooke, W. F. Howard and others, and since a book of this kind must needs take certain things for granted I propose henceforward to take this for granted—that the Gospel and epistles of John are by a single author.<sup>1</sup> The Apocalypse is another story. In ancient as well as in modern times it has been disputed whether this comes from the same hand as the other writings, and this question will come up for discussion in a later chapter.

As for the order in which these works appeared, there is no agreement among scholars. The Gospel certainly seems to be the work of an old man (a point developed at length by G. Hoffmann in *Das Johannesevangelium als Alterswerk*), but then the first epistle seems to be the

<sup>1</sup> See also the note on p. 78.

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work of a very old man indeed. Yet it would be unsafe to conclude that the Gospel preceded the epistle. The Gospel might have been written in instalments over quite a long period and only completed after the epistle. Besides, it is highly probable that parts of the Gospel were composed, in the sense of being given verbal shape in their author's mind, long before they were written down. If a man who had spent his life lecturing on English literature were to write a book on the subject at the age of ninety we should not be surprised to find parts of the book written with a vigour more appropriate to a man of fifty. So the fourth evangelist, at the end of a lifetime's preaching, must in his Gospel have introduced whole sections which he had known by heart for half a century or more. Any attempt to date it, therefore, by internal evidence is bound to be a very speculative undertaking, and probably the only safe conclusion is that, whether or not the epistle preceded the Gospel, the interval between them cannot have been very great.

#### NOTE

The following are some of the more noteworthy variants in the text of the fourth Gospel:

John i. 18. 'The only-begotten God'. This is the reading of the best 'Alexandrian' MSS, and of a few later minuscule MSS, with support from Tatian, the Peshitta and many of the fathers, including Irenaeus, Clement and Origen. All other (Western and Byzantine) authorities read 'only-begotten Son'. Cf. the margin of the R.V. On the principle of *difficilior lectio potior* the Alexandrian reading is to be preferred.

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John ii. 3. 'And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus said. . . .' This is the reading of almost all MSS, but codex Sinaiticus, with several MSS of the old Latin version, reads, 'and they had no wine, because the bridegroom's wine had given out', a reading also noted in the margin of the Harclean Syriac (a seventh-century 'critical edition'). This is one of the many examples in St. John where codex Sinaiticus, usually classed as Alexandrian, has a Western reading.

John iii. 31b-32a. 'He that cometh from heaven (is above all. He) testifieth. . . .' The words in brackets are omitted by most Western authorities (codex Bezae, Old Latin, Curetonian Syriac, etc.) and by one important group of minuscule MSS. Here again Sinaiticus supports the Western MSS against the Alexandrian.

John iv. 9. 'For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.' Codex Sinaiticus again joins codex Bezae and some Old Latin MSS in omitting these words. The bulk of MSS and authorities, however, include them.

John iv. 42. 'And they said to the woman (that) no longer do we believe because of your words (testimony), for we ourselves have heard and we know (have recognized) that this is in truth the saviour of the world (the Christ).' The words in brackets: 'That' is omitted by Vaticanus, Washingtoniensis and some others. 'Testimony' is the reading of Sinaiticus, Bezae and three Old Latin MSS. 'Have recognized' occurs in a few late MSS. 'The Christ' is omitted by the Alexandrian authorities and some others, also by Heracleon, Irenaeus and Origen, but is included by most Western and Byzantine MSS.

John v. 1. 'A feast of the Jews', or 'The feast of the Jews'. Most of the best MSS have the former reading.



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The best authority for 'the' feast is codex Sinaiticus. This variant has a bearing on the identity of the feast in question. Some commentators wish to make it the Passover, but so great a festival could hardly be called simply 'a' feast, and the weight of evidence favours this reading. If, however, 'the' feast is correct it becomes possible to identify it with the Passover.

John v. 4. This whole verse, though needed to explain verse 7 below, is omitted by nearly all the best MSS. It could be a marginal note which became inserted in the text, but it has some support from Tertullian and other patristic writers.

John vi. 56. After this verse codex Bezae adds, 'As the Father in me and I in the Father. Indeed, indeed, I say to you, unless you take the body of the Son of Man as the bread of life you have not life in him.' This reading is in part supported by two Old Latin MSS.

John vi. 69. 'We have believed and have known that thou art the holy one of God.' So all the earliest MSS. Later MSS and all the versions except the Coptic read, 'the Christ, the son of the (living) God', thus harmonizing John with Matthew (xvi. 16), Mark (viii. 30) and Luke (ix. 20).

John viii. 1-11. See above, p. 32.

John ix. 35. 'Dost thou believe in the Son of Man?' This is the reading of the Alexandrian authorities. Others read, 'Son of God.' The former seems preferable.

John xii. 8. This verse is omitted by codex Bezae and the Sinaitic Syriac but included by all other MSS.

John xiii. 32. 'If God is glorified in him.' These words are omitted by many of the best MSS, almost certainly because of their close resemblance to the sentence immediately preceding. This common scribal error, known

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as homoioteleuton, is one to which copyists of St. John must have been specially liable owing to his repetitive style.

John xv. 16. After this verse one group of Caesarean MSS adds: 'This I shall do so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.'

John xviii. 13-27. The Sinaitic Syriac MS has these verses in the following order: 13, 24, 14-15, 19-23, 16-18. Some have held that this gives a more natural sequence of events and represents the true reading, but as it is not found in any but this one MS it seems more likely to be a conjectural emendation by some early and unknown editor.

### III

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK

**M**ost people make their first acquaintance with the Gospels by means of what the textual critics would call 'lectionaries'. That is, they read or hear aloud certain short passages selected from one or other of the four Gospels for use in public worship. The man in the street, or perhaps rather the man in the pew, would recognize at once the parable of the sower or the story of Christ walking on the water, but he would probably be quite unable to assign it to a particular evangelist or to say whether the same parable or story were related by more than one of the four.

This, of course, is as it should be and as it has always been. The Gospel is one. It is the Good News of Jesus Christ, and the words 'according to' merely identify the particular pen which recorded it, much as a business letter from Messrs. Jones and Smith bears a reference

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letter J/X or S/Z to indicate the actual voice that dictated and the typist who transcribed it, though the letter itself is signed by the abstract legal entity called 'Jones and Smith'. In the same way the Evangelion is one, and it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ; but when we come to read each Gospel separately, and with a critical eye, we are at once struck by the differences between them and especially by the unique character of the fourth, the Gospel according to John. As is well known, the first three can be cut up with scissors and reassembled with paste in three parallel columns so that similar episodes and similar speeches lie side by side and a 'synopsis' of all three is obtained by the reader. These three evangelists are therefore known as the synoptists and their three books as the Synoptic Gospels. But let a man try to fit the fourth Gospel into this scheme and he will at once run into difficulties. From the arrest in Gethsemane to the end, it is true, the four stories can more or less lie alongside each other, but in the earlier part of the story the fourth Gospel touches the others only very occasionally. It is, first and foremost, a thoroughly independent document.

Reading it then for the first time, from start to finish and with an attentive eye, what general impression does the reader receive of it? The answer to this question must inevitably be 'subjective', for no two readers are alike. The paragraphs which follow can only represent a personal opinion. But I shall strive to set down only what impressed me out of the Gospel itself, not what has occurred to me later as the result of reading books about the Gospel.

The first and deepest impression I received was of the author's intense devotion to his subject-matter. Whether

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or no he was 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' he was unquestionably a disciple who loved Jesus. That which gives life and fire and vigour to the whole book is this strong feeling of devoted love and admiration. Yet the portrait which it draws of Jesus is in no sense *schwärmisch* or romantic. It is like a Byzantine, rather than any Western, portrait—a figure vastly dignified and aloof and stern, yet capable of superhuman love and gentleness towards the chosen followers. To the fourth evangelist, Jesus was a person so far above him as to deserve unbounded worship, and at the same time so intimately near as to command the tenderest love.

Next, and bound up with this personal devotion both as its consequence and its cause, I observed the downright and confident attribution of divinity to Jesus. It is in this Gospel that Jesus makes his most staggering claims: 'I am the resurrection and the life', 'I am the bread of life', 'I am the way, the truth and the life', 'before Abraham was, I am'. And the evangelist in his own person asserts this divinity in the opening words of his prologue: 'In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.' No room here for double meanings or misunderstanding. If the fourth Gospel speaks truth, then either Jesus was rightly condemned for insane and criminal blasphemy or else he was in very truth incarnate God.

Thirdly, this is a very explicit Gospel. Not because it is easy to understand. On the contrary, it is often hard and mysterious. But this is because what the author is trying to express is in itself difficult and profound, not because he is speaking in riddles. He is trying to speak as plainly as he can. No parables at all are related (for

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the Good Shepherd speech is metaphor rather than parable) and although Jesus sometimes fences with his adversaries there is never any doubt about his real meaning. His arrest is postponed not so much because the authorities doubt that he claims to be the Christ as because some of them doubt whether or not he really is the Christ, and the rest doubt whether they can prove the claim (and disprove the fact) in a court of law.

Fourthly, it is an argumentative Gospel. There is much debate between Jesus and his opponents, many angry and provocative speeches by Jesus, many tart rejoinders. There is no sign of that 'gentle Jesus meek and mild' who has distorted the vision of many and induced in them a mental picture of an inoffensive curate with a seraphic smile who went about doing good (and whose crucifixion is therefore totally inexplicable). In St. John it is abundantly clear why, and how, Jesus made so many enemies—and any man worthy of the name is bound to make enemies.

Considering the book simply as a book, as a work of literature, is it a finished work of art, the work of a literary artist, or a simple, artless production by a man unused to writing? The answer to this question is not easy, if only because it begs so many other questions. What is a work of art? The ordinary educated man who can, perhaps with knitted brows and preferably in a Loeb edition, enjoy the Greek of Plato or Demosthenes is in some ways agreeably surprised when he reads a Greek New Testament for the first time. It is so delightfully easy to understand. But he soon realizes that if the Greek of the fourth century B.C. is a full orchestra, the Greek of the first century A.D. is but a cracked piano. Alexander's conquests may have spread the language of



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Pericles over a very wide area but they spread it lamentably thin. The Greek even of St. Paul is poor stuff, and that of St. John is almost pidgin-Greek—a one-stringed fiddle. What then can we say about the fourth Gospel as a work of literature? What would one say of a man who, playing on a one-stringed fiddle, could reduce an Albert Hall audience to tears? For this is what the fourth evangelist does. Parts of the book are among the most moving and eloquent passages in literature. Judged, then, by his own standards, by his mastery in the use of a very imperfect instrument, St. John must be considered a very great artist indeed.

Yet the book is not, even by these simple standards, a finished work of art. It is badly put together. Some scholars have even conjectured that the sequence of chapter and verse as we have it is not that which the author intended. It has been 'dropped in forme', so to speak. This question will be discussed in a later chapter, but the reasons that have led some people to this conclusion are very obvious. The scene shifts jerkily from Galilee to Jerusalem and back again. We are not always clear where the inverted commas should be opened and closed. Characters like Nicodemus drop in and out unexpectedly. References are made to people or miracles or doctrines which a man who had never read any other Gospel would find extremely difficult to understand. It is hard to believe that a man who could describe each incident and speech so well could string them together so badly.

In its style the Gospel is very conversational. Its vocabulary is small, and the reiterated use of *οὐν* as a conjunction is very reminiscent of the 'and so . . . so then . . .' of a conversational narrative. Furthermore,

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the second and third epistles of St. John evince a dislike for pen and ink and a preference for direct speech. Add that Eusebius preserves a tradition that 'John all the time used a message which was not written down and at last took to writing perforce' (H.E. III, 24), and we have, I think, good reason to imagine this evangelist as a speaker, not a writer. A conversational speaker, too, not a platform orator. Such a man might do very well when writing up separate scenes and dialogues and speeches and yet make heavy weather of composing them into a single coherent whole. At any rate, that is the impression which the Gospel does convey—vivid, dramatic and moving in detail, but somewhat uneven in its construction.<sup>1</sup>

There is another characteristic of this Gospel, however, which to my mind is more important than all the rest put together and floods the whole book (and the Johannine epistles, too) with its light. I mean, that it is the work of a contemplative. Mark suits well the missionary, Matthew the teacher, and Luke, with his 'human interest', is the Gospel for the parish priest. But John is the Gospel for monks and nuns and hermits.<sup>2</sup> Now the disappearance of monks and nuns from Eng-

<sup>1</sup> A minor characteristic of this Gospel, but one which it would be a pity to pass over altogether, is this: There is in St. John a clear vein of dry, rather ironical, humour. It is most evident in the last paragraphs of Chapter I, in the account of the marriage at Cana, and in the examination of the man born blind (ix. 15-34), but outcrops of this vein occur in many passages. The fact that it is clearly present in the story of the adulteress (viii. 1-11) strongly suggests that this *pericope* has Johannine authority, even if St. John himself did not write it into his Gospel.

<sup>2</sup> I do not mean, of course, that these are the only people who practise contemplation, but they are its typical and avowed exponents.

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land and Germany at the Reformation has caused the contemplative attitude of mind to be forgotten, misunderstood and often despised in these two countries, the motherlands of so many able Biblical scholars, and I believe that many misconceptions about the fourth Gospel have been caused by this same misconception of the nature and value of the contemplative life. The very fact that the word 'mystic' is applied to it is significant, for 'mystic' is a vague, unsatisfactory word, often used in a pejorative sense. In the present century, it is true, thanks largely to Evelyn Underhill and some others, a somewhat more sympathetic (but often unintelligent) attitude towards contemplatives has gradually established itself, but the practical life is still the more highly valued. Martha gets more votes than Mary. St. Vincent de Paul is more admired than St. John of the Cross.

A proper understanding, however, of the contemplative attitude of mind is so essential to a right appreciation of St. John's Gospel that something must be said of it, and perhaps it may best be explained somewhat as follows. Everybody knows the proverb, 'Better is a dish of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hate therewith', and every sensible person knows it to be true. Almost any degree of hardship is tolerable in the company of people we like. No degree of luxury is tolerable in the company of people we detest. The proverb goes no further than this. It does not say that we never can have both. It does not deny that a combination of love and stalled oxen, the best of both worlds, is possible. And possible, no doubt, it is. Love in a palace can exist; has existed. Nevertheless, most wise men have discerned that love in a cottage is more probable—that conditions of luxury are unfavourable while conditions of hardship

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are favourable to the development of love and therefore of happiness. For wealth encourages selfishness, and selfishness is almost identical with misery, but hardship and the need for hard work encourage unselfishness and generosity. It is in front-line trenches rather than at the War Office that the truest friendships are found.

But 'human love needs human meriting'. Not all men can gain the affection of others nor find a worthy object of their own; and human love, even at the best, is brittle. Death or estrangement may end it suddenly, leaving the desert drier than it was before. There is only one lover who can always be relied on, only one object of love that can really, wholly and at all times deserve our homage. A contemplative might be defined as a person who has realized the truth of all this, has carried the argument to its logical conclusion and has had the resolution to act accordingly. He makes the love of God his main, his only object in life. He surrenders, or strives to surrender, all that is his, all that he is, to God.

The thing involves a turning upside-down of ordinary human values. Man is born in chains and everywhere he seeks freedom. He starts as a creature just able to suck milk, vociferate loudly and wave his arms and legs about. He ends (if he can contrive to become either very rich or very powerful) with the ability to feed on everything edible which the Earth produces, to make his voice heard in every continent of the globe and to travel by land, sea or air more rapidly than any other animal. In addition he can drop bombs on his neighbours and exterminate them in hordes. His liberty, compared with that with which he started life, is astonishing. Yet all this Progress is merely a lengthening of the chain. The goat is still tethered, and although he now grazes over a

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wider area his chain is heavier than ever (for, having so much to graze on, he is enslaved by the fear of losing it) and the circumference of his unsatisfied desires increases in geometric ratio. Man has immortal longings in him and is never satisfied with less than the All.

The contemplative seeks freedom in a direction directly opposite to the one followed by the world. He seeks it not in the gratifying of appetites but in their destruction. He strives not to lengthen his chains in pursuit of an ever-receding horizon but to shorten them. He pursues not wealth but poverty. From the point of view of the rest of mankind he is facing the wrong way, and the world makes mock of him. When we see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. We esteem him smitten, stricken of God and afflicted. Only occasionally are we shocked and affronted to find in his humility the ruthless texture of a diamond. Then, in self-righteous wrath, we persecute and murder him.

But the contemplative holds a skeleton key to all the locked doors of this life. The freedom he finds is perfect and indestructible, not corrupted by moth or rust. 'Ama, et fac quod vis,' said St. Augustine. Love, and do what you will. If you can, your freedom is complete, because your 'ought' and your 'must' have become identical with your 'wish'. A loving husband does not refrain from beating his wife from a sense of duty but because he feels no inclination to beat her. So the contemplative, in so far as he succeeds in his ideal, obeys the will of God from choice. To disobey would be incompatible with his love. It follows from this point of view that ethics and casuistry become somewhat irrelevant. 'Thou art anxious about many things, but one thing is necessary.' The whole point of the story of Martha and Mary (Luke

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x. 38) is not that Martha did wrong to be busied about much serving but that she presumed to instruct her sister in her duty when that sister was actually listening to Jesus. Mary knew, but Martha did not, that if it was Mary's duty to help at that moment with the housework then Jesus would certainly tell her so. Mary, but not Martha, had faith.

Faith, for the contemplative, connotes something more than it does for the ordinary man. Most of us, when we say, 'I believe in God', normally mean that we assent to the proposition that God exists. But a contemplative means that he confides, that he trusts in God, in much the same way as a swimmer confides himself to the water that bears him up.<sup>1</sup> 'Though he should slay me, yet I will trust in Him.' He endeavours to rejoice in pain, because it is God's will. He endeavours to act always and only as God's agent. And he studies to see and know both himself and the world outside himself as things whose only reality consists in their being, somehow, expressions of an immanent Godhead. For this reason he must necessarily devote much time to prayer, to communing with God, for in order to love God and know His will it is necessary to know Him—to know Him personally, not by theology, but as a man knows his wife or his friends. It is from this addiction to mental prayer that such minds are named contemplative, although in practice they are often extremely active and energetic (for instance, St. Teresa of Avila).

Now contemplative minds—monks, nuns and hermits—are met with in all the great world religions, but a Christian contemplative is in a quite special and

<sup>1</sup> St. John never uses the abstract noun 'faith', only the active verb, 'believe in'.



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unique situation. For him, Jesus Christ and God are interchangeable terms. To know and realize God within himself is to know and realize Christ. 'I live, but not I, it is Christ who lives in me.' And Christ was truly man as well as truly God. He belonged to the world of matter as well as to the world of spirit, and therefore a man can get not merely some tiny, secret, divine spark of himself into heaven, but his whole self, body and soul, joys and sufferings. He can be wholly sanctified, wholly incorporated into the Godhead by incorporation into the mystical body of the risen saviour. Not only so, but things inanimate, bread, wine, water, can become in some way the vehicles of divine action. 'Turn but a stone and you shall find me. Cleave the wood and I am there.' The redemptive work of Jesus extends beyond Man and his soul to the whole material universe. 'I make all things new.'

These considerations, it seems to me, explain many things in the fourth Gospel which have proved stumbling-blocks to some critics. The synoptists, they say, are full of ethics, sound advice for the practice of definite virtues. Why are they absent from John? Obviously, because one thing alone is necessary. Just as Newton's law of gravitation includes all Kepler's laws of motion, so 'Thou shalt love' includes all other commandments. Faith and the sacraments, why are they so prominent in John, so dim in the synoptists? Because Faith, absolute trust and confidence, unites the soul with God, and by the sacraments the body, too, participates in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Things that are implicit in Matthew, Mark and Luke, all the lessons they report but do not fully expound—'The kingdom is within you', 'Become as little children' the mustard seed, the leaven,

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the Lord's Prayer itself—all this and more becomes coherent and fully understood in John. And miracles? What are miracles to one who is heart and soul convinced that all nature is animated and controlled by God? God turns water into wine every year when He sends rain upon the vineyards. What we call miracles are merely 'signs' with a value mainly symbolical, semantic.<sup>1</sup>

And what of the world? To some, the words, 'I pray not for the World', seem ungenerous. But the term has, for a contemplative, an almost technical meaning. It denotes, not only in others but in himself as well, that which opposes and interferes with the vision of God. It is that which chokes in him the only true life, the life of God dwelling within him. It is Self as opposed to God. It is the perennial enemy opposing God, in his own soul as well as in other men and in the institutions of mankind at large.

Consider John's metaphors. God (and the Word of God, made flesh) is light. He is life. The world is darkness, not comprehending the light. The world is death, crucifying the life. Nevertheless, 'these things have I spoken to you that in me you might have peace. In the world you have distress, but take courage. I have overcome the world.'

#### ii

So far, as already stated, I have endeavoured to give a purely personal account of the 'general characteristics' of the Gospel, ignoring, and as far as possible forgetting,

<sup>1</sup> 'The miraculous is directed primarily to unbelievers, who are unable to appreciate more subtle indications.' de Grandmaison, *Jesus Christ*. And cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

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anything that I may have read of commentary or discussion by other men. But when such other writings are taken into account there is almost no limit to the amount that might be written under such a title. To whom, for example, was the Gospel primarily addressed? For what purpose was it written? What religious and philosophical ideas formed the spiritual and intellectual nourishment of its author? Above all, is its content truth or fiction? And as many answers, almost, could be given to these questions as there have been commentaries on St. John.

To what audience? Believers or unbelievers, Jew or Gentile, bond or free? Some have maintained that it is addressed exclusively to Christians, since it assumes a knowledge of the general Christian message. Others, that it is primarily a missionary document; and these are again divided into those who consider that it was to Jews and those who consider that it was to Greeks that the evangelist addressed his book. Probably all these opinions hold some truth. John speaks to believers, yes. But his epistles bear witness that even believers need confirmation in their faith. They must beware of anti-christ and keep themselves from idols. The purpose of the Gospel is explicitly stated in the last verse of the penultimate chapter: 'These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.' There is really no need to say more. To unbelievers, whether Jew or Gentile, it is a call to belief, and to believers a call to the spiritual life.

What was the religious and intellectual background of the author? There is here a vast and fascinating field of study and conjecture, and here again each theory has

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its advocates. There are those who maintain that the Gospel draws every drop of its sap from the roots and soil of the Old Testament alone. Others have held that the evangelist's thought owes more to the Platonists and Stoics. Others again have seen in Philo, the Graeco-Jewish thinker of a slightly earlier date, the principal teacher of St. John. Yet others have pounced on the Greek mystery religions or on Mandeian gnosticism as the sources of St. John's ideas. Probably here again we should do wrong to nail our colours to any one of these several masts. The intellectual and religious air of any century is to some extent breathed in by every man who inhabits it, and writers of this present century can be influenced by Freud, or Jung, or Marx, or Kierkegaard almost without knowing it, and even without having heard their very names. Moreover, in such a case as this, we can never be sure how much we should attribute to external influence and how much to sheer coincidence. In the field of physical science there is nothing commoner than independent discovery of identical truths, and in the fields of philosophy and contemplation a similar tendency occurs. It is analogous to the 'convergent evolution' which is a commonplace of biology, or to those striking similarities which folklorists encounter in the religious ritual of widely separated nations. People who set sail for the islands of the blest are quite likely to catch sight of each others' topsails from time to time, and may even come within close hailing distance as they near their destination.

The suggestion, however, that St. John had anything in common with the gnostics is one which should never have been made. To a superficial eye there may seem to be some resemblance. So, to a visitor from Mars, the

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monasticism of Mt. Athos and of Lhasa might seem to be indistinguishable. Even a modern Christian monk like Dom John Chapman can declare that for years he hated St. John of the Cross and called him a Buddhist. But climbers on a mountain may seem very close neighbours when viewed from the valley, though in fact they may be separated by chasms infinitely deep. The trade mark of your gnostic, manichee, catharist or puritan is a secret, smiling complacency. He is in the closets. He knows. He is of a select and superior brotherhood from which the rest of the contemptible human species is kept out by being enmeshed in matter. His asceticism is not prompted by love of God but by hatred of God's handiwork. He punishes his body not like an officer who trains his soldiers but like an overseer who whips his slaves. He has, in a word, all the sneering pride of Satan. But your true saint, wherever he is found, is characterized by a boundless, an infinite humility, and a deep love for all the things that God has created. His body is not in itself evil but merely, by Adam's sin, disposed to be unruly and in need of discipline. And of which sort is the fourth evangelist? The man who wrote 'the Word was made flesh', 'he that denies that Jesus is come in the flesh is Antichrist', 'the soldier pierced his side and there came forth blood and water', was assuredly no more a gnostic than St. Vincent de Paul.

Finally to the question, is this Gospel true? what answer should be given? A good deal depends on what we mean by truth. Does a heap of graphs and statistics give you the truth about eighteenth-century England? Or is that century more truly portrayed by Fielding, Rowlandson or Smollett? There is no sensible answer to this question, for clearly there can be both truthful

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fiction and untruthful history. But it is relevant to ask which sort of truth we are to look for in the fourth Gospel—the sort we find in the book of Job or the sort we find in the history of Thucydides? A considerable body of opinion favours the former. Such, for example, is the line taken by von Hügel in his article on St. John for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In this view many incidents in the Gospel, and nearly all the speeches, are a sort of inspired fiction, designed as symbols or allegories of a profounder message. It cannot be said that an answer to this question has much bearing on the question of authorship. As stated in the introduction, it would be perfectly possible to imagine St. John doing for Jesus what Plato did for Socrates. Nor is this the kind of thing that can be proved or disproved one way or the other. All that I can do is to express as energetically as I can my conviction that this allegorical or symbolical interpretation is utterly and profoundly mistaken. I do not, of course, mean that the evangelist never erred in the minutest detail of his narration, nor that he reports the discourses of Jesus with the fidelity of Hansard. Such a claim would be absurd. I am speaking simply of his intentions, and I am most profoundly convinced that his intentions were those of an ordinary, honest historian. More than this, they were the intentions of a man determined to apply the rein and bit of strict historical control to those Christians who even then (as in all subsequent ages) were endeavouring to 'reconcile Christianity with Modern Thought' by soft-peddalling certain aspects of the tradition. This intention of recalling Christians to the historical character of their faith forms almost the whole motive of St. John's first epistle, but it is also strongly in evidence in the Gospel as well. Of



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course he thought our Lord's life was symbolical, that every detail of it concealed some profounder meaning, but for him the whole of that symbolism, that divine allegorical aptness which he valued in the life of Jesus, depended for its force on its historical truth. 'Whatever things were written were written for our instruction',<sup>1</sup> wrote St. Paul. And since most of that which was written was historical narrative, St. Paul's words are equivalent to saying, 'Whatever things happened, happened for our instruction'. The allegory has no special force or authority if it be a mere human invention, like the fables of Aesop. Its whole value lies in its divine origin. Such and such things occurred, therefore their occurrence must have been by God's will. Hence they are a sort of book written by God for our instruction. And what the Old Testament narrative was for St. Paul, the events of our Lord's life were for St. John. I am certain that to have invented incidents in that life, or to have distorted the substance of that teaching in the interests of some 'spiritual' symbolism would have been as impossible for him as it would be impossible for a really great artist to paint an insincere picture, or for a genuine scientist to conceal or misrepresent an ascertained fact of observation. How faithfully he may have preserved the actual words of Christ is, of course, another question, but it is at least significant that the discourses have a strongly Aramaic flavour and that there is plenty of 'synoptic-sounding' matter in them as well as some 'Johannine-sounding' matter in the synoptists. (Cf. for instance, Matt. x. 32, xi. 25.)

To say that St. John had the intentions of an honest historian is not, however, to say that his achievement is

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 4.

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that of a successful historian. Like every historian, he was faced with the problem of how much to put in and how much to leave out, and he had not the advantage of inheriting a ready-made tradition. There were no handy booklets entitled, 'Moses, The Man and his Message', or 'Israel Redivivus, A Study of Judas Macabaeus', or 'Tales of a Tub, The Life and Opinions of Diogenes'. The literary problem of presenting the portrait of an historical character, with no precedents to guide him, was a formidable one. To-day, a biographer—whether he is writing a full-length book or a magazine article—employs a familiar technique. Certain facts are grouped chronologically (birth, death, marriage, etc.) and others by subject-matter (political views, religious beliefs, family life, public life, etc.). There is an understood warp and woof, and the pattern they form depends upon the writer's own interpretation of his hero. He will include actions and words which he considers typical and omit others which he considers untypical. St. John had to solve these problems for himself, and I believe that his difficulties may have been complicated by something else. I believe that his mind worked in what we should call a poetical, and which his contemporaries might have called a prophetic, way. That is, his normal point of vantage is the hill-top, where he can see past, present and future in one fore-shortened now. But in his Gospel he must stand by the roadside, watching the procession of history pass successively. He is, I believe, a little confused and puzzled for a method which will satisfy all his needs. There is an order which satisfies chronology, but it is the order of a diary, formless and dull. And there is an order which satisfies logic, the order of interrelated subject-matter. And there is an

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order which satisfies the poetic vision, an order dominated by images—the water of life, the bread of life, the light in darkness, the temple not built with hands. But these three are *not* one. They must somehow be reconciled. And when I say that this Gospel seems badly put together I mean that St. John has not (to my mind) been entirely successful in his solution of this problem. But his main intention is clear. It is to report true facts. And the main drift of his interpretation—the Christology which controls his selection of the facts—is also clear, and it is the same as that of every New Testament writer. Christ was the Son of God. Christ was the Son of Man. He suffered pain and humiliation and death. But He rose again to everlasting glory.

#### IV

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**T**he words 'tradition' and 'traditional', though convenient as shorthand terms, ought in strictness to be banished from the vocabulary of scholars on the ground that they are hopelessly imprecise. Tradition relates, impartially, that King Arthur had a round table and that Queen Victoria was not amused. It is traditional that William Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, Emily Brontë wrote *Wuthering Heights*, and that the Great Pyramid is no more than a very large tomb. Yet all three statements have been contradicted, sometimes passionately. Bacon wrote *Hamlet*, Branwell wrote the *Heights*, and the Great Pyramid is an apocalypse in stone. So, when we say that according to tradition the fourth Gospel was written by John, son of Zebedee, towards the end of the first century, are we in the realms of history or of legend? The present chapter must attempt an answer to this question.

The fourth Gospel, like its predecessors, is technically anonymous. The author does not state his own identity, and the reason for this lies in the general Hebrew tradition. The Jewish religion was essentially a religion of

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history. History (that is, the facts of history), and especially the history of the chosen people, was the work of God. Consequently written history, in so far as it was truthful, was also the work of God. It was the record of the 'Gesta Dei per Hebraeos' and could not therefore be attributed to a human author except in a sort of metaphorical way. Thus the historical books of the Old Testament are, like the Gospels, all anonymous, although their 'authorship' was freely attributed, e.g. to Moses. Herein they are in striking contrast to the prophecies and apocalyptic writings, all of which are by named authors. The prophets declare their identity plainly and frequently (as St. John does in the only N.T. prophecy) and this convention extends even to the pseudonymous apocrypha—the Wisdom of Solomon, the books of Enoch, Noah, etc.

The Greek tradition, however, was quite different. The Greeks were humanists and for them both the facts of history and the written records of it were the work of men. Yet one interesting point may be observed about Graeco-Roman historians. When a Polybius or a Tacitus is writing about events of which he was, indeed, some sort of eye-witness but in which he did not himself play an important part, he writes in his own person, straightforwardly. But when a Xenophon or a Caesar describes events whereof he himself *pars magna fuit*—when, in fact, he was a man who both made history and wrote it, he then writes in the third person. (Thucydides and Dio Cassius do both, according to the context.)

Now the evangelists wrote in Greek but were heirs to a Hebrew tradition, and it is interesting to notice that although they all conform to Jewish custom by writing anonymously and in the third person, yet Luke bows to

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Greek custom by prefixing a conventional preface to his book, while John seems often to be struggling against a temptation to burst into the first person singular, and twice addresses his readers as 'you'. But although the Gospels are technically anonymous there is no reason to suppose that their authors or anybody else intended to keep their origin secret. We never hear of a Gospel that was anonymous in the modern sense, although we do hear of pseudonymous gospels which were detected as such and set aside. It is therefore not reasonable to suppose that when the fourth Gospel was first published, and people asked, 'Who wrote this?' they were given the answer, 'Hush. That is a secret.'

But when was the Gospel first published? Since the days of Baur, who ascribed it to the period A.D. 160-170, the critics have marched steadily backwards, and there is now general agreement that it belongs to the first century. The evidence for this is provided partly by the dates of the earliest quotations from it, but more decisively by fragments of the earliest MSS. which have been unearthed in Egypt. This evidence may be briefly summarized as follows:

(i) Papias. This elusive character wrote a species of commentary on 'The Oracles of the Lord' which survives only in the fragments quoted by later writers. His dates are unknown but are guessed, roughly, as about A.D. 70-140. He claimed to preserve the teachings of the 'elders' who had known the Apostles, and it seems certain that both he and his 'elders' were acquainted with all the Johannine writings. This suggests that all these writings were published by about A.D. 110 at the latest. Irenaeus says that Papias was himself a 'hearer of John', but this has been disputed.



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(ii) Ignatius of Antioch. His letters were for long the subject of controversy, owing to the interpolation among them of later forgeries, but the researches of Lightfoot, backed up by Harnack and others, have established the authenticity of the genuine letters and dated their composition to the period 110-117. Since they unmistakably show the influence of the fourth Gospel it can be concluded that the latter was then in existence and in circulation.

(iii) Polycarp. His letter, written very soon after those of Ignatius, quotes the first epistle of St. John. St. Polycarp has the valuable distinction that his life can be accurately dated. He was martyred on the 23rd of February 155, 'having followed Christ for eighty-six years'. His lifetime therefore easily overlaps that of the longer-lived disciples of our Lord, and St. Irenaeus, in a letter, describes how he himself as a young man had heard St. Polycarp discoursing 'of John, and others who had seen the Lord'.

(iv) The Odes of Solomon. Critics are, with few exceptions, agreed that these date from the year A.D. 100, plus or minus about five years. The editors of the English edition (Rendel Harris and A. Mingana) consider that they were known to St. Ignatius, but Lagrange suspects that the dependence may be the other way. They seem to have been written at Antioch and are generally admitted to show dependence on all the Johannine writings.

(v) The Rylands Library fragment. This is a small papyrus fragment, discovered in Egypt in 1920 and published by C. H. Roberts in 1935, containing parts of John xviii. 31-33, 37-38. Paleographers agree in assigning it to the first half of the second century, and

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the presence in Egypt of a copy of the Gospel at that time implies that the book itself had been in existence for many years when this copy of it was made.

(vi) The 'Unknown Gospel'. This curious and rather tantalizing papyrus MS. also dates from the first half of the second century and contains reminiscences of all the canonical Gospels. Its resemblances in many passages to the fourth Gospel are, however, the most striking and show that the unknown evangelist used St. John as a source.

The cumulative effect of all this evidence is overwhelming and, as has already been said, the conclusion that our Gospel was written before the end of the first century is nowhere seriously doubted to-day. But how long before? If A.D. 100 be the latest date, what is the earliest? Apart from a few writers whose views are discussed in a note at the end of this chapter, the general vote is for a date not much earlier than A.D. 90 or thereabouts. This conclusion is based on the following considerations: (i) The statements of patristic writers and intrinsic probability combine to suggest that oral instruction was preferred to written instruction during the Apostolic age. St. Matthew is said to have written his Gospel (in Aramaic) only because he was about to quit the district where he had hitherto taught by word of mouth. St. Mark's Gospel was probably published in about 65-66 as a written substitute for the oral preaching of St. Peter. St. John is reported to have preached orally until he was almost compelled by his followers to put his teaching into writing. All this was quite in the Rabbinic tradition which laid great stress on the spoken word and shunned the written. (ii) The first epistle of St. John is unmistakably the work of a very old man,

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and its author was assuredly the fourth evangelist. (iii) St. Irenaeus says that St. John lived until the time of Trajan, who acceded in A.D. 98. (iv) All ancient writers agree that the fourth Gospel was indeed the fourth, the last to be written, and nearly all modern scholars agree that it shows a more fully developed appreciation of Christianity than its predecessors, together with an awareness of certain incipient heresies which only developed towards the end of the century. There is less unanimous agreement than there used to be that John can be proved to have known some or all of the synoptic Gospels, but the indications that he did are strong, and those who claim the contrary are almost compelled to tamper with the text. It has indeed been urged that the epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians (*c.* A.D. 95) contains phrases reminiscent of the fourth Gospel and this, if it were a fact, might make a slightly earlier date more probable. St. Clement was Bishop of Rome, and one must allow some time for a book to travel from Asia to Rome and enter into the consciousness of the Church there. But the indications of Johannine influence upon St. Clement are very slight and inconclusive, and this fact in itself suggests that the Gospel was, if not unwritten, at least not widely known at that time.

We conclude, then, that the evangelist wrote this book towards the end of his life, that his life was a very long one, and therefore, since he must surely have been a younger man than Jesus Himself, he can hardly have written it much before A.D. 90. Some time, therefore, in the last ten—or, at a pinch, the last twenty—years of the first century is the most probable date of publication. But against any who still uphold a later date I should like to add an argument of Lord Charnwood

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which appeals to me as a layman. We possess many examples of Christian literature of the second century. Much of it is of great interest to scholars. Hardly any of it possesses any interest whatever for the ordinary reader. If the fourth Gospel was a second-century forgery we are faced with the incredible fact that authors who could only write unreadably in their own persons became fired with an extraordinary literary genius when engaged in forgery. This, as Lord Charnwood concludes, does not make sense, and, as Zahn has said in another context, 'A class of pseudo-writers possessing originality and genius, and able to write in a dignified, crisp and pithy style, has never existed'.

The fourth Gospel, then, was in existence at the beginning of the second century. But so were many other Christian writings—letters, homilies, gospels and apocalypses, some of them valuable, others mere legend. All these formed the raw material out of which the canonical New Testament was fashioned. The process of sifting and winnowing must have gone on all through the century (and indeed beyond it), yet by a comparatively early date—before the middle of the century, in fact—the fourfold Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John had attained a position of authority far above all others. In fact, the unwritten, oral Gospel of those who had been Christ's disciples had barely died out before it was replaced by the fourfold written Gospel which we know. Harnack considered that the fashioning of this fourfold Gospel out of its components took place between the years 120 and 140. At any rate Irenaeus, who was probably born in the thirties of that century,<sup>1</sup> has never

<sup>1</sup> Zahn dates his birth in 115, Harnack in 142. A majority opinion seems to favour 'about 130'. He died *c.* 201–202.

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heard of any other arrangement. For him, the number of Gospels had always been four; *must* always be four, neither more nor less.

The following evidence for this authoritative status of St. John's Gospel by the middle of the century may be cited:

(i) Justin Martyr (c. 100-166). A well-educated and intelligent convert to Christianity who wrote in its defence against pagan and Jewish criticism. He quotes from all four Gospels (and indeed from almost every book in the Bible), but perhaps even more significant than his actual quotations is the fact that he clearly takes for granted those doctrines and ideas which we particularly associate with the name of St. John—the need for a 'new birth', the 'fountain of living water', and especially the Logos-doctrine. St. Justin held that it was the second person of the Trinity rather than the first who spoke with the Patriarchs and Moses, an idea more likely to be suggested by St. John than by any other N.T. writer (cf. John i. 1-4 and viii. 56-58). St. Justin does not mention any of the evangelists (nor even St. Paul) by name. Their names would have meant nothing to the pagan and Jewish readers for whom he wrote. But he does, exceptionally, mention St. John as the author of the Apocalypse, and he frequently refers to the 'memoirs of the Apostles, called Gospels'. All this implies that by the time St. Justin wrote (c. A.D. 150), and presumably also by the time he was received into the Church, all the N.T. writings were officially accepted, read in the churches and regarded as authoritative by orthodox Christians.

(ii) Tatian. This much-travelled man was also a convert who came to Rome in about 150 and became a

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disciple of St. Justin. Later, probably in the seventies of the century, he produced his famous harmony of the four Gospels called the *Diatessaron*. Anyone who has attempted such a harmony will be aware that although it is only the fourth which provides some sort of chronological framework it is also the fourth which is most persistently 'odd man out'. If any excuse had existed for omitting St. John and forming instead a harmony of the three synoptists alone we may be sure that Tatian would have grasped it. His *Diatessaron* therefore testifies to the high prestige of the canonical four, and those four alone, in the middle of the second century.

(iii) Marcion. This famous heretic published an attack on the existing Gospels and concocted a new one of his own in the years 139-144. According to Tertullian, 'he tried to degrade the dignity of those Gospels which were published in the names of Apostles (*sc.* Matthew and John) or of Apostolic persons (*sc.* Mark and Luke) so as to confer upon his own Gospel the credence which he had stolen from theirs'. It would seem that St. Luke alone enjoyed the dubious honour of Marcion's qualified approval, but you cannot discredit books which do not already enjoy such credit.

Finally we come to that group of witnesses who give this evangelist a name, John. The earliest is probably the so-called Anti-Marcionite Prologue, which is found only in later MSS but has been shown by de Bruyne to belong to a period later than Marcion but earlier than Irenaeus—say to the fifties or sixties of the second century. Restored to its probable original form it reads: 'The Gospel of John was published and given to the churches by John while he was still in the body, as the Hierapolitan called Papias, a dear disciple of John, re-



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lates in his five books of Exegesis, and it was Papias who wrote the Gospel at John's dictation.' The last sentence cannot be true, but it may be the distortion of a truth, and the passage may well embody a genuine quotation from Papias. The natural inference is that Marcion had condemned the Gospel as posthumous and therefore spurious. The author of this prologue, instead of merely pointing out the *non sequitur*, has attacked Marcion's premiss as well.

Next comes St. Irenaeus who, as already stated, had been a disciple of Polycarp in his youth and so was linked to the Apostolic age. We may add that Pothinus, his bishop and predecessor in the see of Lyons, was over ninety when he died in 177 and that Irenaeus himself came from Asia where, by all accounts, the Gospel first saw the light. His qualifications as a witness are therefore far from negligible and his testimony is as follows: after describing the origin of the first three Gospels he concludes, "Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, he too published the Gospel, dwelling in Ephesus of Asia." Dr. Burney has made the curious suggestion that because Irenaeus habitually calls St. John a 'disciple' rather than an 'apostle' he distinguished the evangelist from the Apostle. Lord Charnwood comments: 'If this usage of Irenaeus had been in ever so much need of explanation, no conceivable number of passages in which he had spoken of St. John under any designation whatever could by any rational process be made to count against a single passage in which, as a matter of fact, he speaks of St. John expressly as the Apostle with express reference to him as the author of this Gospel. Probably few students of such matters who learn that some great authority has reached

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certain conclusions realize that these great authorities are given to reasoning of this kind.' The truth is that St. John himself seems to have disliked the Pauline word 'Apostle'—perhaps because it means one who is sent forth, and St. John seems to have considered his Master's message as rather a summoning in. At any rate he only uses it once in his Gospel, and then in its more literal meaning of Ambassador.<sup>1</sup>

Slightly later than Irenaeus—in the nineties of the second century—Polycrates of Samos, Bishop of Ephesus, and the eighth member of his family to hold a bishopric, wrote to Pope Victor in defence of Asiatic traditions and said, 'John also, he who leaned upon the Lord's breast, who became a priest wearing the *petalon* and was a witness and a teacher, he sleeps at Ephesus'. The *petalon* was the badge of priesthood worn among the Jews. What Polycrates meant by it in relation to St. John has never been satisfactorily accounted for, but the passage clearly identifies John with the beloved disciple.

To about this period, too, belongs the 'Muratorian Canon', in which, as a preface to the fourth Gospel, appears this interesting tradition: 'Fourth book of the Gospel. By John the Disciple. Having gathered together his fellow-disciples he said, "Fast now with me for three days and let us then tell each other whatever shall be revealed to us." The same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the disciples, that John, subject to the supervision of all, should describe all things in his own name.' Nobody would, of course, deny that there are legendary elements in this passage, but it contains a tradition which appears also in Eusebius and is intrinsically probable, that the author of this Gospel was

<sup>1</sup> The same may be true of St. Mark.

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urged on to write it by his friends and followers. So also Clement of Alexandria, who cites it as a tradition of the 'elders', reports, 'Last of all John, perceiving that the physical facts had already been set forth in the existing Gospels, urged on by his friends and inspired by the Holy Ghost, wrote a spiritual Gospel'.

There is also evidence from heretical sources. The Valentinians flourished from 145-185 and one of them, Heracleon, wrote a commentary on the fourth Gospel. In this he attributed John i, 18 not to the Baptist but to the disciple. That is, he distinguished two Johns, the Baptist and the Evangelist. Another of this sect, Ptolemy, speaks simply of 'the Apostle' when designating the author of the prologue (In the beginning was the Word, etc.).

To all these witnesses we may add the general consent of antiquity. Eusebius belongs to the fourth century but he was deeply read in all the early Christian writings, writings long since lost. It is quite evident from him that the voice of antiquity was, with one exception, unanimous, and the exception—Caius and his 'Alogi'—is the one which proves the rule, for even Caius did not deny that the Gospel was generally *supposed* to be the work of the Apostle. He merely propounded the theory that it was falsely so attributed, being really the work of Cerinthus the heretic who also lived at Ephesus towards the end of the first century. His motives for this were quite plain. The Quartodecimans, the Valentinians and the Montanists cited the fourth Gospel in support of their views, therefore the short way with them was to undermine the authority of that Gospel. Irenaeus refuted Caius by saying, in effect, that this was throwing the baby out along with the bath-water.

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We may sum up all this external evidence as follows: evidence from the beginning of the second century proves that the Gospel was then in existence and in circulation. Evidence from the middle of the century proves that it was accorded a status alongside the other three. Evidence from the end of the century declares its author to have been St. John, the son of Zebedee, in spite of efforts from one quarter (the Alogi) to discredit it.

To this last paragraph we may append an 'anti-strophe'. At the beginning of the second century there was no such thing as a 'canonical New Testament'. By the middle of the century (at latest) certain writings were being accorded a special reverence and consideration. By the end of the century a definite canon had taken shape and that canon was (in theory) closed, in spite of efforts from one quarter (the Montanists) to keep it indefinitely open.

What motives and criteria operated in the mind of the Roman Church in its choice of the 'canonical' writings and its rejection of the apocryphal ones? Much has been written on this subject and to discuss it would require a whole book. Harnack maintains that the criterion was Apostolicity, and claims that the Acts of the Apostles were included so as to establish St. Paul as an honorary Apostle and so canonize his Epistles. But 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so'. Whether we say with Prof. Dodd that the Church's choice was instinctive or whether we say that she was guided by the Holy Ghost, the result is much the same. The choice was made, and a glance at those books of the Apocryphal N.T. which have survived is enough to show that the choice was a good one, and it certainly included the fourth Gospel.

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Now it was perhaps natural, though not very intelligent, for nineteenth-century scholars to brush aside the testimony of the Fathers as they brushed aside the protests of nineteenth-century traditionalists. But there is all the difference in the world between defending a belief that has been held for seventeen centuries and defending one that has been held for less than half as many decades. The fact that Caius and his Alogi were never formally condemned proves that his attack on the authority of this Gospel was by no means so shocking to the second century as were similar attacks to the pious Christians of the nineteenth century. Canon Streeter has even surmised that the Roman Church accepted the fourth Gospel with some reluctance, and there may be some truth in this. A Gospel so markedly independent of the synoptic tradition might well be viewed with suspicion by a Church which had been founded by St. Peter and taught by Mark. And if there had been any cogent evidence that the book was not Apostolic, or only Apostolic at second-hand, then that, surely, was the time when it would have come out. And if it had come out, why should it have been hushed up? The Gospels of Mark and Luke might, quite legitimately, have been called the Gospels of Peter and Paul. But they were not. If the fourth Gospel, like the second and third, had been 'second-hand', there seems to be no plausible reason why the fact should have been forgotten or suppressed. Sentimental reasons? But according to Streeter the sentimental considerations operating in second-century Rome were hostile rather than friendly to this Gospel.

Strangely enough, Canon Streeter, after making his point about a certain 'sales-resistance' at Rome to the fourth Gospel, goes on to say how very inconvenient,

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from an apologetic point of view, would have been any evidence for St. John's early martyrdom. Yet on his own showing any such evidence, if it had existed, would have been the reverse of inconvenient. Plenty of people, orthodox and heretic alike in the controversies of those times, must often have wished this Gospel at the bottom of the sea. Any really plausible excuse for rejecting it would surely have been welcomed with open arms. Yet in spite of all the exegetical difficulties involved in accepting all four Gospels as canonical, they were in fact so accepted. Why, unless their authenticity was beyond dispute by reasonable men?

We have seen that the existence of the Gospel at the beginning of the century and its attribution to St. John at the century's end, are established facts. Many critics pounce upon this 'zone of silence' as a thing of great significance. The attribution to St. John must be a late and deliberate innovation. 'Irenaeus is the zealous herald of this view', writes Heitmüller. But, o'God's name, to whom was the book attributed in the interim? Are we to suppose that it was totally anonymous for about seventy years and then that Irenaeus discovered its authorship and promulgated it so successfully that he convinced even his bitter enemies Heracleon, Ptolemy, Montanus and Co.? Or was it attributed to somebody else for all those years and did it suddenly dawn on everybody in different parts of the world that the attribution was mistaken and that St. John, hitherto unsuspected, was the real author?

No. If the Gospel's existence goes back to A.D. 100, then the attribution to St. John must go back with it. If that attribution was in fact mistaken or fraudulent, then the mistake or fraud must have been perpetrated then,



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not in the eighties of the century. To say, as Harnack does, that the whole tradition owes its existence to a misunderstanding of one passage in Papias implies that Papias was the only Christian of his time in Asia and that all subsequent writers misunderstood him in the same way.

There is another piece of evidence which may, perhaps, be considered 'external' although it occurs in the text of the Gospel itself. At the risk of somewhat anticipating the arguments of the following chapter I will set it out in the words of Sir Frederick Kenyon.

"If the Gospel was written before the end of the first century, as seems now to be irrefragably proved . . . the probability of the authorship of the Apostle St. John seems to be enormously strengthened. At the end of that Gospel is a certificate (John xxi. 24) written evidently by some persons who claimed to speak with authority: "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true." And this disciple is identified above (verse 20) as "the disciple whom Jesus loved, which also leaned on his breast at supper and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?" The beloved disciple can only be St. John; for only the twelve were present on that occasion (Mark xiv. 17) and of the twelve the three closest to our Lord were Peter, James and John, and of these three Peter was the interlocutor with the beloved disciple, and James was dead long before the Gospel was written. Now if the Gospel had been written after the middle of the second century, such a certificate might be explained away as a forger's attempt to authenticate his work . . . but if it were written at the end of the first century, when many persons were alive who could confirm or contra-

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dict it, such an explanation is impossible. To say . . . that this chapter is a later addition, is wholly unjustified. There is no scrap of evidence to support such an assertion, which assumes that after the book had been circulating for sixty or seventy years, far from the place of its origin, and was already approaching or had already achieved (as we know it had by the time of Irenaeus at the latest) general acceptance, some group of men thought it necessary to append to it their certificate of authorship, and succeeded in superseding and causing a complete obliteration of the book as it had been current for two generations. Such a claim is . . . surely negligible.'

The last argument of Sir Frederick Kenyon also disposes of the theory that the Gospel as we have it differs widely from that version of it that was known to Ignatius and Papias. If the book was as widely known and quoted in the first half of the century as the evidence proves it to have been it is quite inconceivable that its original form can have differed widely from its final form without leaving some traces in the MS tradition, and we have seen in the last chapter that this tradition is remarkably unanimous. At any rate the onus of proving such a theory rests squarely upon those who advocate it, and no scrap of evidence to support it has ever been discovered.

The external evidence considered in the foregoing pages is extremely good. As Bishop Lightfoot wrote long ago, it 'reaches back much nearer to the writer's own time and is far more extensive than can be produced in the case of most classical writings of the same antiquity'. But there is this much that can be said against it. Some of it, especially the anti-Marcionite and Muratorian prologues, do contain legendary matter. If part be

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legendary perhaps the whole is legendary too. Moreover, the earliest assertions that St. John was the author have an air of defensiveness, and critics have been quick to point out that nobody defends what has not been attacked. But they are less quick to point out the converse—that nobody attacks what is not already current opinion. That Marcion and Caius attacked the Gospel is sufficiently well known, but that very fact bears witness to the nature of orthodox opinion on the subject. Nor is there any doubt about the motives of these second-century critics. They were in no sense rationalist scholars, forced to their conclusion by weight of evidence. They were quite simply opposed to the Gospel because they disliked its theological implications, and were ready to put forward the absurd theory about Cerinthus as an alternative.

Another argument against the traditional authorship is the so-called 'silence of Ignatius'. In writing to the Ephesians, it is claimed, he would surely have referred to the great Apostle if the great Apostle had recently lived there. I do not think, however, that an unbiased reader of St. Ignatius's epistle to the Ephesians would feel this. He very seldom refers to any person or thing belonging to the past, and is concerned to impress upon the churches the obedience they owe to their *existing* bishops and elders. He does refer to St. Paul, but very parenthetically, and he is clearly moved to do so by the similarity of his own situation to that of St. Paul—carried captive to Rome for martyrdom. Besides, it is not certain (though admittedly most probable) that the fourth Gospel was actually written at Ephesus.

Such, then, is the external evidence. It does not, perhaps, amount to proof, but it is certainly cogent, and it

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forces the opponents of the tradition into some rather disreputable company—for Marcion and Caius are strange fellow-travellers for a modernist, rationalist scholar. At all events it is quite impossible to place this 'tradition' on a par with that of Alfred and the cakes. It is much more comparable with the tradition that Shakespeare, and not Bacon, wrote *Macbeth*—a tradition not beyond all possibility of contradiction (for it has been contradicted) but one for which there is, at any rate, a formidable weight of evidence.

The most reasonable conclusions to be drawn from it all would seem to be somewhat as follows: the fourth Gospel was written towards the end of the first century and published either just before or just after its author's death. It was probably published by the Church of Ephesus and was presumably stated at the time to be the work of St. John. Its credentials were good enough to ensure it a wide circulation and its acceptance as genuine by the Church of Rome, where some prejudice against it would have been natural. Accordingly, it took its place alongside the other three Gospels. Towards the middle of the second century, however, its authenticity was disputed, partly by heretics who disliked its theology, partly by extremists among the orthodox who found that other sects of heretics were citing it in their support. The Catholic scholars of the time, however, reaffirmed its authenticity, and it continued to be accepted until the year 1820. In that year Bretschneider published his *Probabilia*, and so began the long debate which has not yet been concluded.

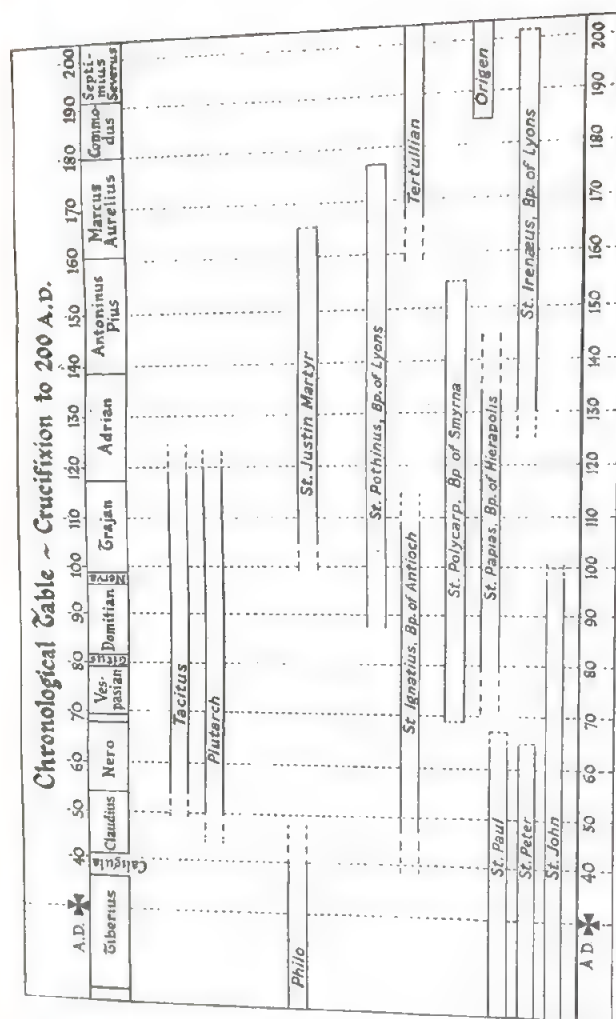
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## NOTE

Some scholars, notably Burney and Torrey, supported by de Zwaan, have advocated a much earlier date for this Gospel and maintain that it was originally written in Aramaic, our Greek text being a rather too literal translation. Prof. A. T. Olmstead goes to the extreme limit and dates it to within a few years of the crucifixion, though he claims that it underwent considerable interpolation at a later date. Few have concurred in this opinion, however, and even for the Aramaic origin there is not much support. Burney and Torrey are not in close agreement about the details of the theory and archaeology does not support the view that a large Aramaic-speaking public for such a book existed at that time.<sup>1</sup> I find it hard to believe, moreover, that any man, writing in his native language, would use so small a vocabulary as John does.

To reject the theory as it stands, however, does not imply that the whole idea of Aramaic origins is a mare's nest. Prof. Manson, in the Rylands Library Bulletin for May 1947, suggested (but did not in that short paper fully develop) an interesting line of research; namely, to compare the distribution of typical 'Johannisms' as indicated by Schweizer with the distribution of Aramaisms as indicated by Burney and with the differences and resemblances between Gospel and first epistle as indicated by Dodd. Certain facts do seem to emerge from this comparison: (i) Burney's most 'Aramaic' sections are predominantly discourses or dialogues (including that

<sup>1</sup> See *The Archaeology of Palestine*, by Prof. W. F. Albright (Pelican Books, 1949), pp. 199 ff.



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between the man born blind and his interrogators). (ii) The non-Aramaic passages are predominantly narrative. (iii) There is in the Gospel little or no correlation between Schweizer's Johannisms and Burney's Aramaisms but the first epistle is, by Schweizer's criteria, Johannine. (iv) The first epistle is non-Aramaic.

Dr. Manson's own tentative conclusion is that 'some of the most striking differences between the Gospel and the epistle turn out on closer examination to be differences between the Aramaising half of the Gospel and the epistle; and it is open to us to entertain the hypothesis that the epistle is the work of a writer composing freely and the Gospel the work of the same writer with his style to some extent controlled by the material which he has to incorporate in his book.' Since that controlling material consisted mainly of speeches by Jesus and others who spoke Aramaic it seems possible that John reports those speeches more faithfully than some of his critics have been disposed to admit.

## V

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Professor Kirsopp Lake, writing of the Johannine question in his *Introduction to the New Testament*, says: 'External evidence, extremely good, is balanced by internal evidence pointing the other way and equally cogent.' Seeing that most upholders of the apostolic authorship ground their case quite as much upon internal as upon external evidence, this statement of Lake's is over-simplification with a vengeance. It implies that *all* the extremely good external evidence points to St. John the Apostle and that *all* the internal evidence points away from him. This is far from being the case, but even if the two sorts of evidence were in fact evenly balanced it would still be extremely rash to regard the latter as carrying more weight than the former. Internal evidence tends, of its very nature, to be ambiguous and to lend itself to various interpretations. This has often been wittily exemplified by applying the methods of biblical criticism to other, more recent, works so as to produce a *reductio ad absurdum*. For instance, Mgr R. A. Knox has written a couple of essays



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entitled 'The identity of the Pseudo-Bunyan' and 'Materials for a Boswellian Problem', in which he sets out to prove, by internal evidence, that Part II of the *Pilgrim's Progress* was not written by the author of Part I (more probably by a woman) and that Boswell's *Life of Dr. Johnson* was produced by three authors, using three separate sources, and themselves worked over later by two redactors. The unnerving thing about these essays is, that although the theories advanced are so absurd, the 'evidence' and reasoning advanced in their support are extraordinarily convincing.

To illustrate the various ways of interpreting internal evidence there is a convenient example to hand in the last chapter of the fourth Gospel. Verse 23 reads: 'Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple (i.e. the beloved disciple) should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die, but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?' Now some critics have concluded that it is quite obvious, so obvious as to need no discussion, that this verse must have been written after the disciple in question had died. Others (including Mr. Bernard Shaw) suppose it equally obvious that it must have been written while he was still alive. No doubt a case can be made out for both views. Personally I am of Mr. Shaw's mind, and I also think that two other conclusions can safely be drawn from this text: first, that the beloved disciple lived to a great age (otherwise no such saying could have gone abroad at all) and second, that the passage must have been written while at least one disciple was still alive (otherwise the suggestion that one of them was to survive until the Second Coming would scarcely have been made). I cite this merely as an instance of how widely different

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readers may disagree about the implications of a single item of internal evidence. The territory to be explored is full of dangers. Yet explored it must be because it looms large in all discussions of this question.

The thing is best done by taking it in two separate ways. First, we shall take the evidence of the fourth Gospel itself, in isolation from the other three, and, secondly, we shall compare its testimony with that of the synoptics. Starting, then, with the fourth Gospel alone, how do the upholders of the tradition present their case? The argument is based upon a sort of triangle of statements, thus: The author = the beloved disciple = St. John the Apostle = the author. It can be set out in a diagram like this:

It will be clear from this that if we can establish the left-hand equation, John = Author, we can disregard the other two for the purposes of this book. If, however, this equation cannot be substantiated it does not follow that we must abandon the Johannine authorship, for the other two equations, taken together, add up to the third in any case. We will take them in their order, reading clockwise.

(i) The author was the beloved disciple. The chief piece of evidence for this is the 'certificate' already cited (from Kenyon) in the preceding chapter. Whether it should, strictly speaking, be considered external or internal to the Gospel itself is perhaps a debatable point, but at any rate it is evidence and must be very early evidence. The point made by Kenyon that neither textual criticism nor intrinsic probability is in favour of this

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last chapter of the Gospel being a late interpolation is extremely cogent, and the linguistic evidence is all against such a supposition. W. F. Howard admits that a close study of the Johannine style and grammar has convinced him, contrary to his own expectation, that this final chapter comes from the same hand as the rest of the Gospel. Somebody, then, at a very early date, identified the author with the beloved disciple. What reasons have we for thinking the identification correct?

A characteristic of this Gospel which is obvious even to a superficial reader is that it abounds in proper names. Where other Gospels have, 'one of his disciples said . . .' John has, 'then Philip (or Thomas or Judas) said. . .'. This habit of always identifying people makes all the more conspicuous those occasions when the evangelist goes out of his way to avoid identifying somebody. There are several instances of this. The first occurs right at the beginning, chap. i. 35-40. Two disciples of the Baptist are mentioned, and one of them was Andrew, Peter's brother. The other remains anonymous. Another example is in xviii. 15. 'Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known to the High Priest.' Finally, there are the various references to 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. He first appears at the last supper (xiii. 23) as leaning on Jesus' breast. Next, at the foot of the cross (xix. 26) where Jesus confides St. Mary to his care. Next, in chap. xx. he is the disciple to whom, with Peter, Mary Magdalen comes running to report the empty tomb and who runs with Peter to investigate. Finally, in chap. xxi., it is he who recognizes Jesus after the miraculous draught of fishes; it is about him that Peter—after his own martyrdom has been foretold—asks: 'What of this man?' and

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it is of him that Jesus replies, 'if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?' The question which we naturally ask is, why does this writer, who habitually attaches a name to the persons he mentions, make this one conspicuous exception? He seems concerned, when speaking of this 'beloved disciple', to make it clear that he always means the same person, yet he steadily refuses to give him a name. Why should he do this unless he was himself the person in question?<sup>1</sup>

To this the critic quite reasonably responds, why should he do it at all? Is it not a very odd and rather vainglorious way of referring to oneself? To our way of thinking it certainly is. Walter Bauer calls it *Anmasslichkeit*, overweeningness. But we must remember that our ways of thinking are not the only ones that ever were. The men of the second century did not see it in this light, and we have proof that one man at least of the first century had the same way of thinking as the fourth evangelist. St. Paul (in 2 Cor. xii. 1-4) speaks of the visions and revelations granted to him by God. Here, and here alone, St. Paul speaks of himself in the third person: 'There is a man I know. . . . This man was carried up into the third heaven. . . . That is the man about whom I will boast; I will not boast about myself.' Note these three points: St. Paul is speaking of an occasion when he was accorded great spiritual privileges; he makes a curious distinction between that privileged Paul and the workaday Paul who writes to the Corin-

<sup>1</sup> There is another person who is never mentioned by name in the fourth Gospel, namely, the Virgin Mary. She is always referred to as 'the Mother of Jesus'. If, as described in the Gospel, she was committed to the care of the beloved disciple and thereafter treated by him as his own mother, this way of referring to her is exactly what we should expect.

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thians; and he feels justified in boasting about that privileged Paul.<sup>1</sup>

The parallel with St. John is close. He, too, is writing about an occasion when he laid his head upon the very breast of God. He, too, writes of that man indirectly, in the third person. And he, too, seems to speak of that privileged man a little boastfully. And, indeed, only a little. What is the total sum of his vainglory? That he was beloved. Has not many a lover also confessed that he was beloved, and is not this confession perfectly compatible with deep humility towards the beloved object? But the humility of saints often looks like its opposite in the eyes of the world.

I would add, a little diffidently, that I find in this attitude of St. John towards his own name yet another manifestation of his contemplative character. Peter and Paul both used names other than those given to them at circumcision, and to this day monks and nuns abandon their worldly names and adopt new. It may be that St. John, too, felt this impulse to forget (as it were) the name that had been his before he was born again of water and the Holy Ghost. Moreover, as Sanday has pointed out, St. John's own Master habitually referred to himself in the third person as the Son of Man, and it is not unusual for a disciple to mimic his master.

But in any event, and however odd it may be to use such a periphrasis about oneself, is it not still odder to use it about anybody else? Harnack suggests that the author was a devoted disciple of St. John whose name was also John and who therefore felt shy of using the name; but on this Dom John Chapman pertinently

<sup>1</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, too, often uses the third person when describing her visions.

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comments: 'My name is also John, yet it has never struck me that I must use a periphrasis when I speak of my patron Saint. Similarly, I feel no awkwardness in mentioning Chapman's Homer.' For myself, I certainly find it easier to believe that the beloved disciple was the author than to believe in the shy disciple of that disciple imagined by Harnack. Nobody, with one exception, would be so likely as the author to use a periphrasis of this kind. The one exception would be a deliberate forger. I can imagine a forger doing it as a way of giving a strong hint that the writer was St. John, and yet salving his conscience in a crooked sort of way by saying: 'I never actually claimed, in so many words, that I really was St. John.' Whether such a crooked line of thought is compatible with the exalted spirituality of the Gospel itself I leave the reader to judge.

(ii) The beloved disciple was St. John the Apostle. This interpretation is by the far the most natural one. Wherever the beloved disciple appears it is always as a very close disciple of Jesus and one who is also associated with St. Peter. Now in all the other three Gospels the disciples who, after Peter, are most frequently mentioned are James and John. According to St. Luke they were Peter's partners. In the Acts we find Peter and John associated as the chief leaders of the Christians. In St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians these two are associated with the other James (first bishop of Jerusalem) as the evident pillars of the Church. The point that the beloved disciple must have been one of the twelve and cannot have been Peter or James has already been made in the quotation from Sir Frederick Kenyon on page 74, and we may add that he must also have been one of the seven mentioned in John xxi. 2, who were

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present by the sea of Galilee after the resurrection, St. John is therefore the obvious candidate for the part.

Nevertheless, many scholars have followed Delff (who got the idea from F. v. Uchtritz) in the ingenious suggestion that this disciple was not St. John but was the owner of the house where the last supper was held. His presence in a place of honour at that supper is thus explained, together with the fact that the other evangelists do not mention it, Jesus and the twelve were guests, and so are mentioned, but this man was in his own house. Moreover he, better than St. John, fits the part of the 'disciple who was known to the High Priest'. It is an attractive theory which found supporters in Bousset, von Soden, Swete and others. The chief drawback to it is that there is no evidence for it. We know, indeed, that this person—the owner of the house—existed. Jesus sent a message to him. But nothing whatever is related of him. Not even his name is known. And it is hard to believe that anyone who played the important role assigned to the beloved disciple in the story of our Lord's passion and resurrection would have vanished so conclusively from the pages of both history and legend. All that legend tells us is that the supper was held in the house of St. Mark's mother. There is no mention of his father in that story. In fact, this 'Delff's hypothesis' reminds one very much of an advocate, seeking to clear his client of a criminal charge, who says: 'How do you know it wasn't the butler? He had the same means and opportunity as the prisoner.' To which the judge would say: 'You are not asked to decide who might have committed the crime. Almost anyone in the house might have done it. You are asked to decide whether the evidence produced is such as to convict the prisoner at the

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bar.' The evidence for the traditional view is certainly much stronger than that for Delff's hypothesis.

Another theory which has gained a surprising number of supporters (including even Streeter) was, I believe, first put forward by Loisy. In this view the beloved disciple was not a real person at all but an imaginary one, a sort of ideal disciple, possibly modelled on St. Paul. I confess that to me this suggestion seems profoundly absurd. Even if we could imagine a Jew of the first century doing anything so unusual as introducing an 'ideal' character, he would surely have told us something about him to indicate what his character was and why it was so ideal. In fact, however, this disciple only appears at the end of the story; he says practically nothing at all, and the only act which throws any light on his character is his behaviour at the empty tomb. He ran fastest and got there first; he stooped and looked in; he did not actually enter until Peter came up and went in first. We are also told that Jesus loved him and confided St. Mary to his care. An imaginary figure? Modelled on St. Paul? I cannot see it. This, surely, is what I may call air-borne criticism, or, in the more formal language of Dr. Bernard, 'a desperate expedient of exegesis'.<sup>1</sup>

If no better candidates than these are forthcoming for the part of beloved disciple, I think we may safely conclude that his identification with the Apostle St. John is the best supported by the evidence.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Macgregor, in the Moffatt commentary, states that St. John, as depicted by the synoptists, was not such a person as would have attracted the affection of Jesus. I do not know how Dr. Macgregor comes to know so much about our Lord's personal likes and dislikes, but the fact remains that the sons of Zebedee were, after St. Peter, the closest to Jesus. (See Appendix B.)



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(iii) St. John was the author. The two preceding propositions, of course, add up to this last one by necessity, but there is also some evidence for this equation independent of the other two. It is partly negative, partly positive. The negative evidence is this: nowhere, in his whole Gospel, does the fourth evangelist mention John, his brother James or their father Zebedee.<sup>1</sup> All the other Gospels do, frequently. In fact, after St. Peter, these two are the most frequently named disciples. The Acts also bear witness to their prominence. It is hard to explain their absence from the Gospel unless one of them were its author, and James, we know, was slain by the sword of Herod (who died in A.D. 44). There remains John, and the fact that he maintains a complete silence about himself and his family is entirely in keeping with his use of a periphrasis when some mention of himself becomes necessary. The fact is, John is in a dilemma. He wishes to 'include himself out' of the story, yet at the same time he wishes to make it clear that he is a reliable witness because he was a close friend of the Lord.

The positive evidence is rather subtle but, to my mind, all the better for that. It is too subtle for a forger to have thought of it. This evangelist is habitually careful to distinguish people of similar names. He hardly ever calls the chief Apostle simply Simon or Peter but always Simon Peter. He is careful to give Judas his surname, Iscariot, and distinguishes the other as 'Judas (not the Iscariot)'. In this regard he is much more care-

<sup>1</sup> The Zebedees are mentioned once, in chapter xxi. This is so exceptional that one is tempted to consider it an editorial gloss on the words 'two other disciples' in the same passage. But there is no MS support for this view.

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ful than the synoptists. But there is one seeming exception to this carefulness. Unlike his three predecessors, the fourth evangelist never speaks of John the Baptist as such. He calls him simply John. This implies that for himself and his readers there could be no risk of confusing the Baptist with the Apostle. This is perfectly compatible with the theory that the evangelist was that Apostle. It is not, I think, compatible with any other theory.

This tripodal argument for the authorship of John, son of Zebedee, is far from negligible. What then did Lake mean by speaking of cogent evidence pointing the other way? Is there any internal evidence which suggests that John was not the author?

There is. It is mainly concerned with the amount of information which John, as contrasted with the synoptists, possesses about the course of events in Jerusalem (as opposed to Galilee) and of what went on in the enemies' camp. His Gospel seems to move in a 'higher social milieu' than the others, and this is held to be incompatible with his character as a simple fisherman of Galilee. Moreover, if 'the disciple who was known to the High Priest' was indeed the beloved disciple, how did the Galilean fisherman achieve this privilege? It was considerations such as these which led Delff and others to postulate a young man of good family, resident in Jerusalem and probably a Sadducee, as the beloved disciple and therefore the fourth evangelist; but I do not think these critics have been sufficiently careful to scrutinize both sides of the medal. They ask, how did the provincial fisherman come to be so well informed about events in priestly circles at Jerusalem? We may ask, in return, how did your young Sad-

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ducee come to be so well informed about events in Galilee and Samaria? The fourth evangelist, in fact, knows far too much about two different sets of facts to have been a personal eye-witness of both. If he was present at the plot to arrest Jesus it is safe to say that he was not present at the last supper, and vice versa.

I believe critics of many schools have gone wrong by a too-rigid interpretation of the word 'eye-witness'. You cannot prove that a man is not an M.P. by showing that he was absent from a particular debate. You cannot prove that the fourth evangelist was not an Apostle by showing that he was absent from some scene which he reports. He quite obviously was *not* an eye-witness of several episodes which he nevertheless declares to have taken place—for instance, when the officer whose son was cured went back home and was met by his servants next day, did St. John accompany him? When Jesus sat by the well and talked with the Samaritan woman, was John there too, taking notes? When Mary Magdalen met the supposed gardener after the resurrection, was John among those present? Obviously not. But we do not therefore call him a liar. How much of his information was derived from others and how much from his own recollections it is impossible to say, but I think we can at least decide between the Galilean fisherman and the rich young Sadducee, albeit by a somewhat subjective method.

Bernard Shaw expresses the sentiments of many readers when he writes: 'John's claim to give evidence as an eye-witness whilst the others are only compiling history is supported by a certain verisimilitude which appeals to me as one who has preached a new doctrine

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and argued about it, as well as written stories.'<sup>1</sup> This vividness and freshness have been noted even by hostile critics and constitute an important argument in the traditionalist's case. But where is it most conspicuous? Which passages in the Gospel seem most certainly to have been written by an eye-witness?

I should say, firstly, the summoning of the first disciples beside the Jordan, described in John i. 28-51. The quite gratuitous geographical information (verses 28 and 44), the mention of the fig-tree, the whole tone and colour of the story is extremely vivid and lifelike. Secondly, I should select the cleansing of the temple—the whip of cords, the overturning tables and tumbling coins, above all the dialogue with the Jews: 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it again.' 'Forty-six years was this temple in building; wilt thou rebuild it in three days?' Thirdly, the conversation between Jesus and his family in John vii. 1-10, not reported by any other Gospel, seems to me unmistakably historical and most vividly described. Another instance is the story of the feeding of the five thousand in chap. vi, especially interesting because it is paralleled in all the other Gospels. It is hard to say which account has the greater verisimilitude, John's or Mark's. It is John who gives a name to every speaker but it is Mark who contributes the vivid touch that the people sat down on the green grass like rows of flowers (*πρασιὰὶ πρασιὰὶ*).

Chapter xi. provides another lifelike picture—the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sanday, *Criticism of the fourth Gospel*: 'If the Gospel is not the work of an eye-witness, then the writer has made a very sustained and extraordinary effort to give the impression that he was one.' As for the first epistle of St. John, it would be hard to imagine a more emphatic claim to the status of an eye-witness than the first three verses of that epistle.

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news of Lazarus's illness, the dialogue with the disciples, especially the remarks of Thomas in verse 16. So does the washing of the feet in chap. xiii, an episode not mentioned by the other Gospels but of which traces appear in Luke xxii. 27 and in 1 Pet. v. 5. So do the opening verses of chap. xviii, with the mention of the brook and the appearance of Chiliarch with his soldiers upon the scene, and in the Passion narrative there are several flashes of verisimilitude. Yet one of the most vivid scenes of all, to me, is the one described in chap. xxi.—the appearance of Jesus beside the sea of Galilee and the draught of 153 fishes. I can almost smell the charcoal fire and the fish being grilled.

These, then, to my mind, are the most lifelike passages in the Gospel, the ones about which one would most confidently declare, 'there speaks an eye-witness'. In themselves, of course, they do not prove that the author was in fact an eye-witness, any more than the vivid touches in Mark (presumably derived from St. Peter) prove that St. Mark was one. But as between Delff's hypothesis and the tradition, which do these passages favour? The Apostle and fisherman of Galilee or the young dweller in Jerusalem who knew what went on in the enemies' camp? I have no hesitation, myself, in replying, 'the fisherman of Galilee'.

Must we then conclude that all the material which belongs to a 'higher social milieu' came to the evangelist at second-hand? Not necessarily. We cannot project modern ideas of snobbishness into first-century Palestine. The Jews were a tribal society, and even to-day the relations between a Highland chief and his humblest clansman are very different from those between a London millionaire and his employees. Moreover, the Jews

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were surrounded by a hated and despised world of Gentiles. To an Annas or Caiaphas any genuine Jew, however obscure, was a more acceptable acquaintance than the wealthiest Greek or Roman. And it is not only in the fourth Gospel that Jesus makes acquaintance with the great. One man of great possessions nearly became his disciple (Mark x. 17-25 and parallel passages) and the frequent protests at our Lord's lack of social discrimination, His addiction to low company, imply that plenty of His followers were snobs. Scribes and Pharisees frequented him and not all were unsympathetic. Jesus told one of them that he was not far from the Kingdom (Mark xii. 34).

It has often been pointed out, moreover, that what little we do know about the worldly circumstances of Zebedee and his sons does not suggest anything very abject. He had hired men to help him in the fishery, and the fishery of that lake was a prosperous one. His wife, Salome, was probably one of those who helped to finance our Lord's activities, as described by St. Luke, and the circumstances of her requesting places of honour in the kingdom for her two sons (Matt. xx. 20) may have been due to a quite human snobbishness and a feeling that the Zebedees were a cut above the rest of the disciples. One is reminded of those 'leading churchwomen' of the present day who also show, sometimes, a tendency to seek the first place.

As for the 'sources' of St. John's knowledge concerning what went on between the Pharisees and the High Priests—and indeed for all that he relates beyond what he saw and heard for himself—it is of little use to inquire. But we do know from Acts vi. 7 that some of the priestly party became Christians. Presumably they im-

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parted their knowledge to Peter and John. It is sometimes said that the character of the fourth evangelist, as revealed in his work, does not accord with that of the ardent young 'son of thunder' described by the synoptists. To this complaint I can only say, quite simply, that I do not agree. Allowing for the lapse of half a century of prayer and fasting, teaching and meditation, I think the two characters are perfectly compatible. True, the chief message of St. John is: 'Little children, love one another', but only a sentimentalist supposes that love consists in giving one another nice toys to play with. It is often the truest charity to kick one's neighbour hard, where it hurts most, and the fourth Gospel certainly exhibits our Lord as doing so whenever the circumstances call for it. In fact, if the fourth evangelist has a fault it is a tendency to be vindictive. We see it most in the Apocalypse, but it is present also in the Gospel and epistles, and in the story that John, in his old age, refused to enter a bath-house where Cerinthus the heretic was, lest God's anger should destroy the very building. St. John's partiality for avenging fire from heaven is vouched for by St. Luke (ix. 54).

To sum up the results of this chapter, let us put the question in the form of three simple alternatives. Either (a) St. John the Apostle wrote this Gospel, or (b) someone else, pretending to be St. John, wrote it, or (c) someone wrote it who neither was St. John nor had any idea of being mistaken for St. John. Now it appears to me, in the light of all that has been said above, that alternative (c) is inadmissible. Why should an honest man, setting out to write a book of this kind, have gone so tortuously to work whenever his narrative came anywhere near the sons of Zebedee? The character which

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this alternative forces us to envisage is a person altogether too improbable. These objections do not apply to alternative (b). A pseudo-John, a forger, might have written the book as we have it. But the difficulty with this hypothesis lies in squaring the exalted spirituality of the book with the deceitful character of such a forger—for the fraud, if there be one, is exceedingly subtle. There remains alternative (a) which, to my mind, involves no difficulties in any way comparable with those involved in (b) or (c). So far, in fact, the tradition is upheld. In the next chapter, however, we must consider the Gospel not in isolation but in relation with its three predecessors, the synoptists.



## VI

# JOHN AND THE SYNOPTISTS

What is a gospel? And what is The Gospel? Most people know that the word translates a Greek word, *'Evangelion'*, which means 'good news', but in classical Greek this word is generally used in the plural and means rather the reward given to a bearer of good news, especially news of victory. By the middle of the second century, in Christian usage, it had acquired its modern meaning of a book written about Jesus Christ, and especially one of the four Gospels called canonical. Indeed, it meant rather the whole four of them taken collectively, for where a modern writer would speak of 'the third Gospel' the Muratorian Canon speaks of 'the third book of the Gospel. According to Luke.' But what did the word mean to the N.T. writers themselves? Evidently it had neither of these meanings. In Paul, Mark and Luke it means 'the Christian Message' or 'the Christian Revelation'. In Matthew, following a more primitive usage,

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it is nearly always qualified with the words 'of the kingship of God', and it means rather 'the proclamation' of that kingship. In all these writers it is a proper, not a common noun, a word which modern usage would spell with a capital letter—The Announcement. As for the verb 'to evangelize', it is found almost solely in Paul and Luke and can mean proclaim, announce, teach, preach, or even simply to report. (See note on p. 118.)

The fourth evangelist uses neither of these words. Among the Johannine writings they are found only once in the Apocalypse, a book whose curiously Pauline vocabulary has been noticed by scholars before now. We therefore have few means of telling what the word meant to John. It is just possible that by the end of the first century it had begun to acquire its modern meaning of a written book, but it is not very likely; and it is still less likely that John himself would have used it in this sense. Throughout the whole of his lifetime it had meant a Message—the Good News of Jesus and of the Reign of God. How much did that message include? What was the minimum statement of facts that could call itself The Gospel?

The answer to this question would naturally depend on whether a Jew or a Gentile were concerned, but assuming a belief in one sole God, creator of heaven and earth, the specifically Christian message would contain four main dogmas: that Jesus was the Christ foretold by prophecy, the sole son of this sole God; that he suffered and died by crucifixion; that he rose again from his tomb; and that he continued to dwell with his Church in the Eucharist and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is the rudimentary Christian Message which is found in the epistles of St. Paul and in the speeches of

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St. Peter reported in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> And this, we may presume, constituted the 'Gospel' as the Apostles understood that term.

But the four written Gospels contain a good deal more than this. They were not, indeed, biographies. Biography in those days was almost an unknown art. But they do report many particulars of the life and teaching of Jesus which, because they were concerned with Jesus, must be of immense interest and importance to Christians, yet which were not, in themselves, part of The Gospel. A man could be baptized and confirmed into the Church without having heard of the parable of the sower, but he could not be baptized unless he had heard and believed that Jesus was the Christ who had died and risen again. Our written Gospels therefore fall into two natural halves—on the one hand the essential Good News, from Gethsemane to the resurrection, and on the other hand the less essential 'Memorabilia', that is, the words and deeds of Jesus in the years preceding his arrest. The former of these, the Gospel *par excellence*, is the only considerable part of the story which is related at length and in detail by all four evangelists. The Memorabilia are clearly regarded by them all as of secondary importance.

When that 'Synopsis' from which they get their name is made of the first three Gospels some interesting facts emerge. Firstly, the material common to the three is in all cases closely similar. For paragraphs at a time we find hardly a word altered. Even granting the pheno-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A. Special interest attaches to any doctrine taken for granted in Romans. Such doctrine must have been the common creed of all Christians, since Paul himself had no hand in founding the Church at Rome.

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menal memory of Semitic peoples it is hard to explain this as due to the inheritance of a common oral tradition, nor even to the use of a common written source in Aramaic. It implies direct literary dependence of two synoptists upon the third. To avoid a long digression about the priority of Matthew or Mark, let us call these evangelists S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>, and S<sub>3</sub>, numbered in chronological order of publication, and simply say that S<sub>2</sub> and S<sub>3</sub> incorporated parts of S<sub>1</sub> into their own Gospels, almost verbatim. A second fact which emerges is that this 'material common to all three' is very nearly equivalent, in content and length, to the whole Gospel of St. Mark. This means that in these passages we have not really a threefold testimony. We have only a single testimony, namely, that of S<sub>1</sub>, whom the others copy. Where John and the synoptists disagree, therefore, the odds are not three to one against John. They are even. John versus the original synoptist.

Another, and very striking, fact which emerges from the same study is this: that in spite of the close fidelity with which S<sub>2</sub> and S<sub>3</sub> copy the matter and even the words of S<sub>1</sub>, they seem hardly concerned at all to preserve the same sequence of events. Though hardly daring to alter a syllable of S<sub>1</sub>'s narratives and speeches, they exhibit an almost careless freedom in rearranging the order in which they occur. This implies an indifference to chronology which seems quite extraordinary to a modern reader, bred up as he is on Evolution and the necessity for tracing the growth and development of a character, movement or theme. But there it is. None of the evangelists seems at all interested in chronology, and it is significant that the only explicit date which is mentioned by any of them (in Luke iii. 1) is of very little use

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to historians, for it has proved impossible to discover with certainty which was 'the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar'.

Yet another feature of the synoptic account concerns geography. On the face of it, one would say that according to the synoptists (and especially Mark) our Lord never in adult life set foot in Jerusalem until the final Passover. Yet this is contrary to all probability—since pious Jews habitually went up for the major festivals, and no one ever accused Jesus of impiety towards the Temple—and it is even inconsistent with several statements in the Gospels themselves. For example, if he was a stranger to Jerusalem, how was Jesus able to make all those arrangements for the ass on which he rode into the city and for the supper which he ate there? Why did the disciples tremble at the prospect of accompanying him thither (Mark x. 32) unless they knew that he had earned the enmity of the authorities? Why did Jesus weep over the city in the terms reported by St. Matthew (xxiii. 37)? Assuredly he had been there more than once, yet the synoptists virtually ignore the fact. It would seem that they were ready to subordinate both chronology and geography to some other consideration, and I suspect that this consideration was a desire to emphasize the distinction between the Memorabilia of Jesus' life and the essential Gospel of his death and resurrection. The former they placed in Galilee. The latter in Sion.

When we turn to the fourth Gospel we find a completely different picture. Contrasted with the careful dependence of the two later synoptists upon their predecessor we find in John a confident and frank independence, as if (to quote Menoud) he was in a position to

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say, '*la tradition, c'est moi*'. This is most clearly seen in chap. vi, where he is (exceptionally) relating an episode also reported by all three synoptists. There is absolutely no question in John of slavish adherence to precedent. He tells the same story, but entirely in his own words. It is *The Times* and the *Telegraph* reporting the same boat race. Elsewhere, moreover, John is at pains to correct the synoptists where he thinks their narrative mistaken or ambiguous. It is this independence of the synoptists which is John's most conspicuous feature, and it was the one which, in the eyes of critics fifty years ago, did most to discredit him as a trustworthy witness. Later, such men as Goguel and Streeter laboured valiantly to prove that, on the contrary, John was dependent on the synoptists, or at least on Mark; but their arguments were merely special pleading—like saying that two men are very much alike because their fingernails are of identical shape. The independence of John is obvious and massive, as Gardner-Smith has convincingly shown.

Nevertheless Streeter was right, and Gardner-Smith was wrong, in one respect. St. John's Gospel does stand in a special and important relation to St. Mark's. It is not that of literary dependence, as Streeter claimed, nor is it the negative relation of total ignorance, as Gardner-Smith insists. Rather is it, as Prof. Dodd has acutely discerned, a curious but quite unmistakable family relationship, like the minutiae of glance, expression and mannerism which sometimes betray the blood-kinship between two otherwise dissimilar brothers. For the full discussion of this kinship I must refer the reader to C. H. Dodd's *The Apostolic Preaching* (third lecture), but the following points are worth mentioning. Both John

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and Mark begin and end at the same historical termini, and both develop similar themes in approximately the same order. Both emphasize the *isolation* of Jesus, for it is Mark who adds the words 'and among his kindred' to the saying about a prophet being unhonoured, and it is John who says that even his brethren did not believe in him. Both represent the disciples as being dull and blind, even up to the last supper. 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel hath not known me, and my people hath not understood.' John, too, on more than one occasion, echoes the very words of Mark as if, when seeking for the Greek equivalent of an Aramaic word, it was the bad Greek of Mark rather than the much better Greek of Matthew or Luke which first came into his mind. Therefore, when comparing St. John with the synoptists, it is natural and reasonable to let Mark stand as spokesman for all three—mainly because he stands in this special relationship to John but partly, too, because his Gospel contains all the material which is common to the three synoptists together. How does this comparison between them work out?

St. Mark begins with a short prologue, relating his Gospel to the Hebrew prophecies, and then proceeds to the baptism of John. After this Jesus at once retires into the wilderness 'and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him'. Full stop. 'Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee.' How long an interval is represented by that full stop? It has been said before that there is no such thing as a synoptic chronology, but there are nevertheless certain *obiter dicta* in Mark from which chronological hints can be gleaned, and the fact that they are set down unconsciously enhances their value. One of the first things

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mentioned about the Galilean ministry is the episode of the disciples plucking ears of corn (Mark ii. 23), indicating a date in June when the fields were 'white already to harvest'. How long before this date was the baptism in Jordan? We have to make room for our Lord's sojourn in the wilderness, and allow time for John to attract the dangerous patronage of the Tetrarch Herod, earn the enmity of his wife and daughter and get himself put in prison. If we put it at from four to six months we shall probably be not far wrong, and this would make a date between December and February a probable time for Jesus' baptism.

Another chronological hint is contained in Mark vi. 39, where the five thousand sit down on the green grass like rows of flowers. This vividness suggests the account of an eye-witness (presumably St. Peter) and points to a date in March or April of the following year, for green grass is short-lived in Palestine. After this there is no indication of the time of year until we come, in chap. xi., to the final Passover of the crucifixion, a year after the feeding of the five thousand. Since the crucifixion is fairly generally agreed to have taken place in A.D. 30 we can sketch out the following approximate chronology for the Gospel of St. Mark:

A.D. 28 (January?): Baptism of Jesus.

About June: Plucking of ears of corn.

A.D. 29 March/April: Feeding of the five thousand.

A.D. 30 April: Crucifixion.

We may add that, as Mommsen has shown, the year 27/28 (October to October) is one of the two or three quite eligible candidates for the 'fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A chronological hint may be contained in Luke iv. 18. Prof.



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We turn next to John, and fortunately there are many more chronological hints in the fourth Gospel than there are in the synoptists. This is not, I think, because John attaches much more importance than they do to chronology as such, but because he does attach importance to the feasts of the Jewish liturgical year. These are mentioned and identified very frequently, and the fact that, as Dr. Austin Farrer has pointed out, a similar liturgical preoccupation dominates the imagery of the Apocalypse, is one of the reasons for supposing that both books are by the same author. At all events the evangelist is keenly interested in these feasts, and his mention of them enables us to produce a much more detailed chronology for John than we can for Mark.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth Gospel, like the second, begins with a prologue, and in it we meet for the first time that strange family resemblance between the two books. Both prologues have for their theme the revelation of Christ in prophecy, but the Marcan prologue presents this theme in its curt and literal youth. The Johannine prologue is the same theme in its most sublimely spiritual maturity. Next, like Mark, John takes us to the banks of the Jordan and to the Baptist's witness that Jesus is the Christ. But he takes up the tale at a later stage than Mark. The baptism and sojourn in the wilderness belong to the past, and the Baptist speaks in the past tense. 'This is

Olmstead, relying on Jacob Mann's *The Bible as read in the old Synagogue*, dates this incident on 18th December A.D. 28. In Luke the episode occurs at the beginning of the Galilean ministry, but parallel passages in Matthew and Mark (xiii. 54 and vi. 1 respectively) suggest a somewhat later stage. The very aptness of this text from Isaiah might constitute a temptation to place it, as St. Luke does, at the beginning.

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Turner's chronology is similar to the one given above, but one year earlier (Dict. of the Bible).

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he of whom I said, there cometh one after me.' After this we are told in some detail how Jesus spent the next few weeks or months, and since we learn that in the middle of it he went up to Jerusalem for the Pasch (John ii. 13) and also (iii. 23) that John was still baptizing, we can identify this period with the blank space in Mark, between the baptism and the first preaching in Galilee. In other words, it is the spring and early summer of A.D. 28. At the end of this period Jesus leaves Judea (John iv. 1-3) and returns to Galilee, and it is reasonable to suppose that his discourse about the harvest in iv. 35-38 was prompted by the condition of the fields through which he passed.

We now come upon a long blank in the narrative of John, just as we did in Mark, for the only episode between the healing of the officer's son at Capharnaum and the feeding of the five thousand in the following spring is the unsatisfactory chap. v. with its unidentified 'feast of the Jews', concerning which, and the theories of its displacement, we shall have more to say later. Chap. vi. is dated by its mention of the Passover, and John, like Mark, reports the plentiful grass. But there is no suggestion that Jesus went up to Jerusalem for this feast. On the contrary, the opening verses of chap. vii. imply that he remained in Galilee throughout the summer of 29. He did, however, go up privately to the feast of Tabernacles in October, and at this point St. John says goodbye to all chronology. Led on from discourse to discourse he finds himself, by the 22nd verse of chap. x., already arrived at the feast of Dedication in December, implying that Jesus remained in Jerusalem all the time. But it is not very probable that he did. If his life or liberty was in danger in the spring it would have been

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just as much in danger in the autumn. Yet John gives no hint of any return to Galilee. What he does record is a retirement across the Jordan after the feast of Dedication, say in January of A.D. 30. This carelessness of general chronology combined with close attention to the liturgical year is striking and characteristic, but it is at this point that we again begin—after a long interval—to make contact with the Gospel of Mark. St. Mark, though still as vague as ever in matters of time and space, does in chap. x. locate our Lord in Transjordan and begins to bring him, via Jericho, back into the neighbourhood of Bethany and Jerusalem. Mark x. 1-xiv. 11, in fact, corresponds approximately in chronology and geography to John x. 40-xii. 50, and at these points in both Gospels the Memorabilia of Jesus' life are brought to a close and we approach the Gospel News itself.

So much, then, for the general picture. Its principal features are these: the period of time covered by the two Gospels is the same, and we can identify with some confidence three dates in both accounts—the beginning of the Galilean ministry in the summer of 28, the feeding of the five thousand in the spring of 29 and the crucifixion at the Passover of 30. Yet the two evangelists hardly ever report the same matter. Where Mark is blank, John is full of detail. Where Mark is detailed, John is a blank. This fact is the most conspicuous one which we meet with in the comparison of John with Mark and it can hardly be accidental. But before drawing any conclusions from it there are a few matters of detail to clear up.

It would be impertinent in a layman to assume the mantle of a commentator and weary the reader with

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discussion of all the parallel passages in the two Gospels. Moreover, I believe that a truer picture of the situation is more likely to be seen when the two are held together at arm's length than when they are placed in turn under a microscope. But there are a few matters which do demand discussion, even in a book of this kind, namely, the question of John's chap. v, the significance of his chap. vi, the date of the cleansing of the Temple and (although it really belongs to the later half of the Gospel) the date of the crucifixion. Firstly, then, this matter of chap. v. It has always been a nuisance to commentators. It comes very abruptly after chap. iv, for Jesus seems hardly to have arrived in Galilee before he is off to Jerusalem again; and it comes still more abruptly before chap. vi. At one moment we are listening to a discourse in Jerusalem, and at the next we are crossing the sea of Galilee in a boat. Nothing more awkward could be imagined.

The favourite way of dealing with the difficulty is to suppose a displacement of sheets in the MS and to place chap. v. after chap. vi. Sometimes this arrangement is backed up by reading in John v. 1 not 'a feast' but 'the feast' and identifying it with the Passover of John vi. 4. The best MSS., however, read 'a feast', and there are other drawbacks to this solution. Chap. v, it is true, *may* be inserted between vi and vii without much difficulty, but it cannot be said that the change is imperative. Chap. vii follows quite comfortably after chap. vi. In fact, if chap. v were removed from the Gospel altogether it would not make very much difference. Not much difference, that is, except in one respect. Whether we remove it altogether or insert it after chap. vi we are left with an enormous gap between the arrival

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of Jesus in Galilee that summer and the Passover of the following spring. Moreover, if this 'feast of the Jews' was in fact the Passover (or any other feast), why does the evangelist not tell us its name? He is always at pains to do so elsewhere. Alternatively, if St. John was so indifferent to historical truth and so set on symbolism as some of his commentators would have us believe, why did he not simply invent a feast day, suiting its symbolical character to the discourse then delivered? Is not the simplest explanation something like the following? John has recalled the healing of the paralytic. He knows that it must have taken place in Jerusalem, and therefore that Jesus must have come thither for some festival. But he cannot remember which. Where shall he insert it? Obviously in that big gap between the arrival in Galilee and the feeding of the five thousand. Accordingly he places it there, intending, perhaps, to round off its edges a bit. But the job never gets done, and so there stands this awkward chapter as a mortification for commentators.

The next question concerns chap. vi. Here St. John, exceptionally, relates in full an episode already reported by all the synoptists, and with no apparent intention of amplifying or correcting their account. His doing so is sufficiently unusual to demand an explanation, and the explanation is not far to seek. He relates this miracle as an introduction to the discourse on the bread of life. But even so, why tell the story in such detail? Because the doctrine of the sacramental Body of Christ is here divorced from its synoptic context at the last supper and St. John is concerned to make three important points. First, that the Lord's flesh is meat indeed—for he sets out the doctrine in its most uncompromisingly literal

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form; second, that it is the *true* bread, of which the manna in the wilderness was but a type, being a mere food for the body; and third, that it is offered to all men, not just to the twelve at the last supper. The feeding of the five thousand from a few loaves and fishes is thus a type of the Blessed Sacrament, multiplying the flesh of one body to feed the whole Church. In order to make these three points St. John has really no choice but to relate the whole miracle at length.

Our next point is the cleansing of the Temple. John places it at the beginning of his story, at the Passover of A.D. 28. The others report it at the end. Which is correct? Since the episode took place in Jerusalem, and since St. Mark is seemingly ignorant of any but the final visit of Jesus to the city, he is in a manner compelled to date it as he does. John, however, could have dated it anywhere, and there are several reasons for supposing that in placing it where he does he is correct. In Mark we find that the disciples view with great uneasiness our Lord's projected visit to Jerusalem, and this is much more readily understood if Jesus had already done something to make himself unpopular with the high-priestly party there. Then in Mark we find quoted at Jesus' trial not his provocative behaviour in clearing out the traders from the Temple but the words (reported only by St. John) which he uttered on that occasion: 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will rebuild it.' But the witnesses cannot agree in their accounts, and this does not suggest that the incident was a very recent one. Finally, we have the protest of the Jews reported by St. John: 'This Temple has taken forty-six years to build.' It is inconceivable that the fourth evangelist undertook research into the date of

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Herod's first starting to rebuild it, and then carefully wrote down 'forty-six years' so as to support his own chronology. He reports the words because they were really spoken. But they do confirm his chronology because they point to the year A.D. 28 at the latest. In this particular, then, it seems more probable that John is right and Mark is wrong.

Finally, the date and time of the Crucifixion. Mark's account is rather ambiguous. He represents the high priests as determined to avoid any uproar on the festival day, he describes the disciples as walking quite a long way after the last supper, he says that one of them carried a sword, he mentions that Simon of Cyrene was coming in from the country—all these things, and indeed the whole business of the arrest, trial and execution of Jesus, are most unsabbatical and quite inconsistent with his statement that the last supper was the Paschal feast and that the execution was carried out upon the most solemn feast-day of the Jewish year. John, on the other hand, is perfectly consistent and emphatic. The crucifixion took place on the day before the feast, the day when the Paschal lambs were killed, and he is corroborated by our earliest witness, St. Paul, who likens the crucifixion to that same slaughtering of the lamb, and the resurrection to the lifting of the first-fruits on the morrow of the feast.<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt that John is right. All witnesses agree that the crucifixion took place on a Friday, and Prof. Olmstead, using Dubberstein and Parker's *Babylonian Chronology* 625 B.C.—A.D. 46, claims that the date can now be fixed with certainty on April 7th (Julian Calendar) of the year 30—the day before the Passover, a conclusion

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7, xv. 20.

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which most scholars had in any case arrived at on other grounds. As regards the time of day, Mark says that our Lord was crucified at the third hour. This, at the equinox, would be about nine o'clock in the morning, and would mean that the whole business of the trial before Pilate, the scourging and so forth, must have been completed before Pilate had had his breakfast. Mark cannot mean this. It is much more probable that he meant by the 'third', 'sixth' and 'ninth' hours much what we mean by 'forenoon', 'midday', and 'afternoon'. But John is quite clear and precise. It was the sixth hour when Christ was crucified, that is, at twelve o'clock. And here again there cannot be much doubt that he was right.

So much for the chronology of John and Mark, but before leaving this subject altogether I should like to mention one point which has not, to my mind, been sufficiently emphasized. I mean, the astonishing brevity of our Lord's whole ministry, even on the most generous estimate of its length. Jesus of Nazareth divides all history, like a watershed, into B.C. and A.D. No man who ever lived in it made so profound an impression on the world. Yet compared with any other of the world's great spiritual leaders He completed His mission with positively blinding speed. Three years at most. And in the same period He roused the Jewish authorities to a frenzy of hysterical hatred. It took Socrates a lifetime so to provoke the men of Athens. Yet there are still people who would have us believe that Jesus never said or did anything at all unusual.

We pass next to the Gospel proper—the Good News of Jesus Christ, his passion, death and resurrection. But before reaching it we find in both evangelists a 'bridge passage'. In Mark it is the institution of the Eucharist.



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In John it is the discourse in the upper room. There is here a most striking repetition of what we have already met with in the prologue—a reinterpretation on a spiritual plane by John of that which in Mark is more literal and material. Mark describes the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. John omits it. He leaves out our Lord's supper as he left out the baptism. But instead, for four whole chapters of the most moving language in the New Testament, he develops the great theme of the Mystical Body. We may recall the words of St. Augustine on this theme: 'You are the body of Christ and members. Your divine mystery is set on the table of the Lord. You receive your mystery. . . . Why then in bread? The Apostle himself says, when speaking of this Sacrament: "We, being many, are one bread, one body" (1 Cor. x. 17). . . . Being many, one body. Remember that bread is not made of one grain but of many. When you were exorcized, it was as if you were ground in the mill; when you were baptized, it was as if you were moistened with water; when you received the fire of the Holy Spirit, it was as if you were baked. Be what you see and receive what you are. This the Apostle has said about the bread.'<sup>1</sup> The Church, the bread, the Christ. And these three are one.

From Gethsemane to the resurrection the two evangelists are necessarily describing the same sequence of events. Yet even here, where it would seem well-nigh impossible, we find that John steers carefully to one side of the wake left by his predecessor. Except for occasional cues, so to speak, when a repetition of Mark's words is almost inevitable if his own account is to remain intelligible, John avoids treading *precisely* in Mark's

<sup>1</sup> Serm. cclxxii.

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footprints. It is the same pattern that we met with in the earlier parts of both books. Where Mark is fullest, John is briefest; what Mark passes over slightly, John emphasizes. The two Gospels are almost like a mask and a face or a casting and its mould. Where one sticks out the other is recessed. And so they can be harmonized together almost like chorus and semi-chorus in a tragedy, each capping the other's verses.

Nor is it only in respect of his narrative that John cuts his outlines, so to speak, to fit the contours of Mark. Both the scene and the character of Christ's teaching are different. In Mark we are almost always in Galilee. In John we are mainly in Jerusalem. In Mark our Lord teaches in parables. In John there are no true parables at all. It may be, of course, that these two things are linked together—perhaps our Lord did not, in Jerusalem, use the parable so frequently as he did in Galilee. We may add, too, that St. John throughout his Gospel adopts a sterner attitude towards organized Jewry than does St. Mark. The latter, probably echoing the conciliatory attitude of St. Peter, pursues an 'open-door' policy towards the Jews. Guilt for the crucifixion rests upon their leaders, not upon the race. There is still time to 'repent, and believe the Gospel'. But by the time the fourth Gospel was written that time had gone by. The Jews as a body had not repented, and the ghastly siege and ruin of Jerusalem had been their punishment. John seems to be saying to them: 'No sheltering behind parables or ambiguities! Plenty of Christ's teaching was plain and explicit enough, as I can show. But you rejected it. Your awaited king came to you, lowly and riding upon an ass, and you said to him, "We have no king but Caesar".'

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Prof. Kirsopp Lake once wrote: 'The real Johannine problem is the difference between Mark and John.' But there would be no great problem if that were all. Every historian, barrister or high-court judge knows well enough that no two eye-witnesses ever tell the same story unless there has been collusion, and that their different stories are often difficult or even impossible to reconcile with each other. It is not the fact but the nature of the difference between John and Mark that calls for explanation, and no explanation which implies that John was ignorant of Mark will really hold water for a moment. No one who had not read the second Gospel could possibly have been so accurate in avoiding just those parts of the story which had been already told. Moreover, where John does repeat some passages of Mark it is nearly always for the purpose of commentary, modification or correction, and sometimes he seems deliberately to emphasize the correction—as in the matter of the date and time of the crucifixion. To say that the fourth evangelist, if he had read St. Mark's Gospel, would not have dared to contradict it, is only reasonable on the assumption that St. Mark had achieved, by the end of the first century, an overwhelming prestige, and that no one then living could possibly have possessed—nor even imagined himself to possess—a superior source of information. Gardner-Smith says that no one brought up on the synoptic tradition could have written as John wrote. But when John wrote nobody at all, except a very young man indeed, could possibly have been 'brought up on' that tradition. No book, not even a Gospel, achieves that sort of prestige in so short a time. The fourth Gospel, whoever its author may have been, was written well within the life-

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time of the longest-lived Apostles, and St. Mark, when all is said, was not an eye-witness himself.

It remains to consider John's motives, and some pretty sinister ones have been attributed to him by, for example, Windisch. He interprets the words of Jesus: 'All who came before me are thieves and robbers', as being St. John's own commentary on the synoptists—a poor demonstration of that brotherly love which the same Windisch considers was John's chief contribution to Christian ethics. The most natural explanation is surely not so far to seek. Why tell again a thrice-told tale except where, in some details, it had been 'forgot, or misdelivered'? St. John was a very old man, the last survivor of the Apostolic age. It is not very fanciful to imagine his disciples addressing him somewhat as follows: 'You have taught us much which our books do not relate. You have shed new light upon much which our books do contain. But "how will it be when none more saith, I saw?" Before you die, write us a Gospel of your own.'

This, it seems to me, is all that need really be said upon this question. Whole books could be written, and have been written, under the title of 'John and the Synoptists', but for the present purpose enough, perhaps too much, has been said above. The question is only in a minor degree relevant to the problem of authorship because, as I have said before, the most honest and undoubted eye-witnesses do habitually disagree quite sharply, and differences far more acute than those between Mark and John would be quite compatible with an apostolic authorship for John and an apostolic authority behind Mark. What does emerge quite clearly from it all is this: that the fourth evangelist shows great confidence in his own tradition and great indepen-

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dence in his treatment of it. He does not hesitate to correct his predecessors in some points of detail, and his corrections, in so far as we can judge of them, seem to be historically justified. And underneath it all, subtle yet unmistakable, is this deep spiritual kinship with St. Mark. The two Gospels are, in a sense, the same Gospel. Only, where St. Mark (and perhaps St. Peter) saw things plainly, bluntly, literally, St. John saw them subtly, profoundly, spiritually. We might say that he lit St. Mark's pages by the lantern of a lifetime's meditation.

## NOTE I

On the use of the words Evangelion and Evangelize.

(i) The verb 'evangelize' is used in the N.T. almost exclusively by St. Paul and St. Luke. It occurs in the LXX as a translation of the Hebrew word *bāsar*, which means simply to announce, and may be used of any news, good or bad. But in the N.T. it has acquired a technical (though not perfectly precise) meaning which may be inferred from the examples below. In each quotation, the italicized words translate some inflexion of the single Greek verb *εὐαγγελίζομαι*, my object being to exhibit the syntactical usage rather than to render the precise sense; for the verb is used now transitively, now intransitively, requiring sometimes an object in the dative, sometimes in the accusative, sometimes in both. Unless otherwise stated, the presence of the English preposition 'to' indicates the use of the dative case in the Greek.

Matt. xi. 5 'The poor *are evangelized*,' from Isa. lxi. 1. This may be a harmonistic reading borrowed from Luke vii. 22. The words are

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omitted from a few ancient texts of Matthew.

- Luke i. 19 'I am sent *to announce* these things to you.'
- ii. 10 '*I announce* to you great joy.'
- iii. 18 (The Baptist) '*Proclaimed* many things to the people.'
- iv. 18 'He has sent me *to preach* to the poor.' (Isa. lxi. 1)
- viii. 1 'He went about announcing and *proclaiming* the kingdom.'
- ix. 6 'They went about the villages *preaching* and healing.'
- xvi. 16 'The law and the prophets were until John. Since then the kingdom of God *is proclaimed*.'
- xx. 1 'When he was teaching the people in the Temple and *preaching*.'
- Acts v. 42 'The Apostles ceased not *proclaiming* Jesus Christ.'
- viii. 4 'Scattering, they went about *preaching* the word.'
- viii. 12 'They believed Philip *preaching* about the kingdom.'
- viii. 25 'They *evangelized* many villages of the Samaritans.'
- viii. 35 'He *proclaimed* to him Jesus.'
- viii. 40 'He *evangelized* all the cities.'
- x. 36 'He sent his word *proclaiming* peace through Jesus Christ.'
- xi. 20 'They spoke to Greeks also, *proclaiming* the Lord Jesus.'
- xiii. 32 'We *tell* you that God has fulfilled the promise.'

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- Acts. xiv. 7 'They were *preaching* in Lystra and Derbe.'  
 xiv. 15 'We are men like you, *instructing* you to turn from these empty things unto the living God.'  
 xiv. 21 'Having *evangelized* that city.'  
 xv. 35 'Teaching and *preaching* the word of the Lord.'  
 xvi. 10 'God has summoned us *to evangelize* them.'  
 xvii. 18 'He *preached* Jesus and the resurrection.'  
 Rom. i. 15 'We were eager *to preach* also to you in Rome.'  
 x. 15 'How gracious are the feet of those *announcing* good things.' (Isa. lii. 7. The LXX is slightly different.)  
 xv. 20 'It has been a point of honour with me *to preach*. . . .'  
 1 Cor. i. 17 'God did not send me to baptize but *to preach*.'  
 ix. 16 'If I *preach* it is no glory to me . . . woe to me if I did not *preach*.'  
 ix. 18 'So that, *preaching*, I may plant the Gospel free of charge.'  
 xv. 1 'You know the Gospel which I *preached* to you.'  
 xv. 2 'In what words I *preached* (it) to you.'  
 2 Cor. x. 16 'To *preach* unto (eis) the parts beyond you.'  
 xi. 7 'I *preached* the Gospel to you gratis.'  
 Gal. i. 8-9 'If an angel from heaven *preach* to you beyond what I *preached* to you . . . if any one *teach* you beyond what you have received.'  
 i. 11 'I make known the Gospel *preached* by me.'

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- Gal. i. 16 'That I may *proclaim* him in the nations.'  
 i. 23 'He who once persecuted us now *proclaims* the truth.'  
 iv. 13 'Through weakness of the flesh I *preached* to you.'  
 Eph. ii. 17 'He *proclaimed* peace.' (Isa. lvii. 19)  
 iii. 8 'To me the grace was given *to proclaim* the riches of Christ.'  
 1 Thess. iii. 6 'Timothy *reported* to us your faith and love.'  
 Heb. iv. 2 'We were *evangelized* as they were.'  
 iv. 6 'They who were formerly *evangelized* did not enter.'  
 1 Pet. i. 12 'The things now announced to you through those who *taught* you in the Holy Spirit.'  
 i. 25 'This is the word *preached* unto you.'  
 iv. 6 'Therefore it was *preached* even to the dead.'  
 Rev. x. 7 'As he *taught* his servants the prophets.'  
 xiv. 6 'Having an eternal Gospel *to pronounce* upon those on earth.'

(ii) The noun, Evangelion, occurs in classical Greek nearly always in the plural and signifies the reward given to the bringer of good news rather than the news itself. So perhaps in the LXX (2 Sam. iv. 10). In the N.T. it is used by the following writers:

*Matthew* Four times, and always qualified by the words 'of the kingdom', except at xxvi. 13, where it is 'this Gospel'.

*Mark*. Seven times, in five of which it is used by itself, absolutely, suggesting that it has already become 'jargonized'.

*Acts*. Twice. ('The word of the Gospel' and 'the Gospel of love'.)



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*Pauline Epistles*. Fifty-nine times.

*1 Pet. and Revelation*. Once each.

The following facts are evident. The word 'Gospel', like the word 'Apostle', is essentially Pauline, and it is rather curious that St. Luke, who makes such free use of the *verb*, should make hardly any use of the *noun*. But the fact is that Luke uses the one word 'evangelize' where the other evangelists use the phrase 'announce the Gospel'. St. John uses neither verb nor noun except in the Apocalypse. St. Matthew's usage seems to be the most primitive: 'the proclamation of the reign of the Heavens.' In St. Mark, as in the Pauline epistles, it means 'the Christian Message'.

The use of the word in its modern sense, of a written book giving particulars of the life and teaching of Christ, seems to begin in the early part of the second century. What these books were originally called is not known. Papias seems to use the word 'logia' (= 'oracles' or 'scriptures') of St. Matthew's Gospel. Justin Martyr, in the middle of the century, speaks of the 'Memoirs of the Apostles, called Gospels'. It should be noted that the word 'history', in its modern sense, is a late one. Xenophon's book is called 'Memorabilia', and Caesar's 'Commentaries'. St. Mark, however, starts his book with the words: 'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ', and it may be that in this way the word became a *title* for his book and so spread to the other three.

## NOTE II

### *John and Luke*

Although St. Mark is the obvious man to choose as spokesman for the three synoptists, a comparison of

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John with Luke is instructive in another way. From one point of view (as has been said already) it is St. John who is 'odd man out' among the evangelists, but from another point of view it is St. Luke. Matthew, Mark and John have this in common, that they are all 'primitive'—in outlook if not in date. They are historical documents rather than histories. But the third Gospel is a history. Its author has undertaken research, accumulated notes and material and consciously formed them, by selection, omission and adaptation, into a continuous work of literature. The others, including John, are more rudimentary. Their attitude towards their subject-matter, too, is more intimate. They are in the house as members of the family; Luke is there as a guest. They are the clergy or vergers who speak out loud in the cathedral; Luke is the visitor who speaks in a reverent whisper. Thus Luke is always respectful towards the apostles, which the other three are not. Luke has borrowed much of his vocabulary from St. Paul, which the other three have not. Luke 'tones down' parts of Matthew and Mark which might seem disedifying to strangers, and avoids terms which would be unintelligible to Gentiles. He uses a consciously literary style—a sort of Biblical-Hellenistic language which seemed to him liturgical and appropriate. The style of the others, including Matthew, is less self-conscious. There is, one might say, no lectern in the back of their minds. In all these respects St. John belongs with Matthew and Mark, not with Luke.

## VII

# PRESTER JOHN, AND OTHERS

**T**he 'Johannine Problem' in most of its ramifications was developed by ingenious scholars of the nineteenth century, but there is one root of it which goes back to antiquity. It is this: why does the Apocalypse, in style and vocabulary, differ so markedly from the other Johannine writings? The first person to notice the fact and to attempt an explanation of it was, so far as we know, St. Dionysius the Great, Bishop of Alexandria from A.D. 247-264. To be sure, he exaggerates, for he represents the evangelist as a writer of first-class Greek and the Apocalypstist as next door to illiterate. Neither statement is true, and a great deal of the contrast in style can be explained by the immense difference in subject-matter between the two books. Nevertheless, when all due allowances are made, there remains much which is difficult to explain if John the Evangelist and John the Divine were one and the same person, and St. Dionysius concluded that they were not.

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He postulated the existence of two Johns, both living in Asia at about the same time, of whom one was the beloved disciple and the author of the Gospel and epistles, whereas the other wrote the book of Revelation. The only external evidence, however, which St. Dionysius could find to support his theory was a report he had heard that two tombs were exhibited at Ephesus, both claiming to be that of 'John'. This evidence, however, even if it were a fact, is very weak. As Dr. Austin Farrer remarks, we might by the same reasoning infer the existence of many Oliver Cromwells in seventeenth-century England from the number of skulls purporting to be his.

Better evidence was discovered by Eusebius, writing in the following century. He discovered a sentence of Papias which can be interpreted to imply the existence of two separate Johns in Asia, John the Apostle and 'John the Presbyter', and accordingly he attributed the Apocalypse to John the Presbyter. But before considering his famous 'Papias-citat' we should note that Eusebius's premisses do not lead to the conclusion which he drew. On the contrary, if there was a 'Presbyter John' distinct from the Apostle John, then he must have written not the Apocalypse but the Gospel and epistles, for the second and third epistles explicitly declare that their author was somebody called 'the Presbyter'. Why, then, did not Eusebius draw the conclusion—drawn in modern times by J. H. Bernard and others—that it was the Apostle who wrote the Apocalypse and the Presbyter who wrote the rest? The answer is that Eusebius was not disinterested. Like many in the Eastern Church, he disliked the Apocalypse and wished to deny its Apostolic authorship. For a time, in fact, it was excluded

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from the canon of the Eastern Church. But if the logical conclusion had been drawn from Eusebius's arguments it would have been the Gospel, not the Apocalypse, which would have been banished, a result desired by no one.

But were there, in fact, two contemporary Johns in Asia? The quotation from Papias, upon which this theory rests, is as follows: 'If anyone came who had followed the presbyters, I would inquire the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or what Peter said, or what Philip or what Thomas or James or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples, and what Aristion and the presbyter John, disciples of the Lord, say.'

The first question to be asked about this passage is, does Papias include Andrew, Peter, etc. among the 'presbyters'? Are 'the words of the presbyters' and 'what Andrew, etc. said' two ways of saying the same thing? They may be. But on the other hand they may not. They may equally well mean, 'I inquired what the presbyters *reported* Andrew, etc. *to have said*'. In the first interpretation we have presbyter=Apostle; in the second we do not. We thus come upon a serious ambiguity at the start. Yet even were this ambiguity resolved it would not greatly help us, for we cannot be sure that the word 'presbyter' applied to John at the end of this passage is used in the same sense as it was at the beginning. There is good reason to believe, as Jülicher and Chapman have pointed out, that this John was called the Presbyter much in the same way as Gladstone was called the Grand Old Man. It was a title or nickname. The author of the second and third Johanne epistles called himself simply 'the Presbyter' (=the Elder) and Papias has another passage in which the word is similarly used:

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'The Presbyter used to say this: Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately (although not in order) all that he remembered of the sayings and doings of the Lord; for he himself never heard the Lord nor followed him but, as I told you, he afterwards followed Peter; and the latter delivered his teaching, out of the speeches of the Lord, as occasion required, not in orderly arrangement. Thus Mark did not err in writing down single points as he remembered them, for he made a point of leaving out nothing that he heard and of making no false statements therein.' This criticism of St. Mark's Gospel, here attributed to the 'Presbyter', is so authoritative in tone and so well corresponds to the attitude of the fourth evangelist towards his predecessor, as exhibited in our last chapter, that it is hard to doubt that this Presbyter was the author of the fourth Gospel as well as of the second and third epistles. Moreover, it is entirely in character for the fourth evangelist to call himself by some such title as The Old Man.

It thus remains uncertain (a) whether Papias normally used the word 'presbyter' so as to include some of the twelve Apostles in its scope and (b), whatever his normal usage of the term may have been, whether he used it in the same sense when applying it to John. And there are also two other questions raised by this passage. First, does the fact that John appears twice—first among the Apostles and again coupled with Aristion—imply that there were two Johns, an Apostle and a 'presbyter'? and second, is there any significance in the change of tense from aorist to present indicative? Papias used to inquire what Andrew, Peter, etc. (including John) *said*, and also what Aristion and John *say*. Here again there is ambiguity. He may have wanted to hear what John

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and the other disciples (then deceased) had said in the past *and also* what the sole survivor, John, was still saying. Without a much clearer indication of the context it is difficult to guess what period Papias is talking about. If the year was, say, 115, and 'John' was then still alive we can be sure that it was not the Apostle (who cannot have been born much later than A.D. 10). But if the period of which Papias writes was the last decade of the first century, then his 'John' may well have been the Apostle. The fact that he calls him a 'disciple of the Lord' would seem to clinch the matter in favour of the earlier date, but unfortunately, although the Greek MSS are unanimous, the Syriac version omits those very words. The only conclusion we can reach is that there *may* have been two Johns in Asia, but the hypothesis is by no means proven.

If there were in fact two Johns at Ephesus we are certainly provided with an explanation of the Apocalypse difficulty, and St. Dionysius and Eusebius are so far justified. But in that case Archbishop Bernard is surely right in reversing the Eusebian hypothesis. It must have been the Presbyter, not the Apostle, who wrote the Gospel and epistles. Yet for this hypothesis there is no ancient authority whatever.

The principal objection to all these theories seems to me to be this, that in accepting them we are forced to postulate the existence of two men whose resemblance to each other is altogether excessive. Both were Jewish Christians, both were called John, both were in all probability Palestinians (for the very name John was unusual outside Palestine, and both Gospel and Apocalypse strongly suggest that their authors' native tongue was Aramaic), both were spiritual geniuses of the first

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order, for the Apocalyptist had absorbed all the imagery and symbolism of the Old Testament and redelivered it in Christian terms, while the writer of the first epistle gave us the outstanding message that 'God is love'. Both were close contemporaries, for one of them was the son of Zebedee and the other (whether or not Papias called him 'a disciple of the Lord') was a very old man at the end of the first century. Both were men of great authority among the churches of Asia—a sort of archbishop—for the Apocalyptist addresses an encyclical to the seven churches, and the author of 1 and 2 John writes pastorals to some of them. Such a situation of Tweedledum and Tweedledee is exceedingly hard to swallow.

Moreover, no one seems to have noticed this extraordinary coincidence at the time. Had Eusebius, in his vast reading of early Christian writers, come upon any but that one ambiguous passage in Papias to support his theory we may be sure he would have quoted it. But he does not. Nor do the parties concerned make any reference to each other. The evangelist, when speaking of John the Baptist, deems it quite unnecessary to distinguish him from any other John, as if he himself were the only other John in the field; and the Apocalyptist, when citing his own name, never calls himself 'John of so-and-so', or 'the son of such-and-such', but simply 'John', as if he were the only John in the field.

Finally, if we examine the Apocalypse more critically and, ignoring the style,<sup>1</sup> concentrate on the matter and thought and imagery, we find its resemblance to the Gospel and epistles becoming closer and closer. The same *ideas* recur. The concept of the Lamb of God. The

<sup>1</sup> The styles are not so excessively different. Ernst Lohmeyer has pointed out some striking similarities of grammar and syntax.



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concept of the Word of God. The preoccupation with certain metaphors—light and water, darkness and thirst. The evident interest in all sorts of symbolism. There are also certain literary habits, notably a tendency to return to an idea again and again; to work, as it were, in spirals, picking up the same thought at higher and higher levels. This tendency expresses itself not only on a large scale in the general plan of John's writings—e.g. in the Apocalypse, the first epistle and the longer speeches of the Gospel—but also in an unmistakable literary mannerism of verbal repetition. 'In the *beginning* was the *Word* and the *Word* was with *God* and the *Word* was *God*, the same that in the *beginning* was with *God*.' There are abundant instances of this. We may cite, for example, Rev. iii. 15-16, 21-22; Rev. ii. 2-6; Rev. xxi. 3, 22-24; John i. 1-5; John iii. 11-16; 1 John ii. 7-11; 1 John v. 6-8 and many others. Even the strongest advocates of dual authorship are compelled to recognize these resemblances and to admit that one of the two Johns must have been a close disciple of the other.

But is it really credible that two men, so closely similar in all external circumstances as well as in mind and soul and way of thought, can ever have existed simultaneously? The two are only held apart by some differences of verbal style, and is not almost any explanation of these differences preferable to the incredible chain of coincidence demanded by the two-John hypothesis? Several quite plausible explanations have been put forward which certainly do seem preferable. It has been suggested that a long period of time may have separated the Apocalypse from the other writings—although this is clean contrary to the external evidence. Dr. Farrer's

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theory is that when writing the Apocalypse, with its Old Testament flavour, St. John deliberately employed an artificial style based on the Septuagint, much as William Blake, in his prophetic books, used a sort of Biblical English quite different from his normal language.

Another theory is that either the Apocalypse, or the Gospel or both were originally written in Aramaic and translated into Greek by different hands. More plausible still, perhaps, is the theory that John, though he could speak and preach in Greek, never became a fluent writer in that language, and relied on the assistance of a Greek-speaking secretary. It should be borne in mind that writing, in those days, was regarded much as we regard typewriting to-day—a thing that any educated man could do but which in practice was usually done by professionals. If two different amanuenses were responsible for planing and polishing St. John's Greek language the similarity of ideas under a difference of style is explained. Most probably there is some truth in all these theories. We are, after all, comparing poetry with prose—for the Apocalypse might be described as the last great Jewish and the first great Christian religious poem—and such comparisons are always difficult. One is not surprised to find linguistic differences between Coleridge's *Table Talk* and *Kubla Khan*.

Weighing all these considerations in the balance, then, it does seem more probable that one man, John called the Presbyter, wrote all five of the Johannine writings in the New Testament. But was he identical with the Apostle, the son of Zebedee? Many have held that he was not the Apostle but a disciple of the Apostle who may have seen Jesus in his youth but derived most of

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his information from his master, the son of Zebedee. It is a theory which fits in quite well with Delff's hypothesis, discussed on p. 88. If this were true, if the two Johns existed not simultaneously but successively, and only the second of them engaged in any literary activity and became an archbishop, then it is easy to see how Irenaeus and his contemporaries may have made a natural mistake. A rather long arm of coincidence has still to be invoked—for this John the Presbyter, a man of the same name, living at the same place and time, and 'recognized by contemporaries as having had similar opportunities' (Kenyon) is still remarkably like the Apostle. Having got so far as this why not simply accept the tradition and be done with it? (Or would that be too commonplace, too old-fashioned?) Still, the theory is just credible. But what to my mind is not credible is the figure of John the Presbyter which then emerges. A disciple of the Apostle John who resolutely ignored his very existence and omits all reference both to St. John and his brother James? A disciple of St. John who never hints that there was or ever had been anyone of that name (bar the Baptist) besides himself? A man, moreover, who gives pretty clear hints in his Gospel that he himself is the Apostle? Such a man, surely, is a psychological monstrosity. Moreover, if this Presbyter was not the son of Zebedee, what became of the son of Zebedee? How did a man, so important in the Acts of the Apostles, fade into such insignificance that his identity became merged into that of his contemporary and alleged disciple, the evangelist? To this question the answer comes pat from a dozen critics—the son of Zebedee died a martyr's death, long before any of the Johannean writings saw the light.

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This answer, that St. John died young, is one which I confess that I am reluctant to discuss. I am afraid (to quote from my introduction) of seeming offensive and perhaps unjust. But at least I should be in good company, for even so just a man as Archbishop Bernard admits to a similar feeling, and Dr. Howard simply refers his readers to the International Critical Commentary where, on the one hand, will be found Dr. Charles's advocacy of the theory (in the volume on the Apocalypse) and (in the volume on the Gospel) Dr. Bernard's refutation of it. Very briefly, the arguments are as follows:

(i) In Matt. xx. 23 and Mark x. 39 our Lord tells the sons of Zebedee that they will drink of the same cup which he himself must drink. It is argued that since no prophecy is ever made except after the event, and since this prophecy can only refer to a physical, lethal martyrdom, it follows that St. John must have been martyred like his brother, and probably at the same time.

(ii) A fragment published by de Boor, and attributed by him to Philip of Side (c. A.D. 430) reads: 'Papias says in his second book that John the Divine and his brother James were done away with by the Jews.'

(iii) George the Sinner (ninth century) says: 'Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, who was an eye-witness, states in the second book of his Dominical Oracles that he (John) was done away with by the Jews, thus fulfilling with his brother the prophecy of Christ concerning them.'

(iv) One or two ancient martyrologies celebrate 27th or 28th December as the feast of the apostles James and John. The most ancient of these is Syrian, of the fifth century. This implies that the two brothers were martyred together, or at least that both were martyrs.

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The objections to all these items of evidence are very numerous. I give a selection. The first argument is based on two false premisses. Prophecies were not only recorded after the event, for in Matt. xxiv. 29-31 and Mark xiv. 24-31 we find prophecies which have not been fulfilled to this day. As for this particular prophecy, it will bear other interpretations. Indeed, if 'drinking the cup which Jesus drank' refers to the passion and crucifixion, it cannot be said that even James did more than barely sip that chalice. There is ample evidence, too, that this seeming non-fulfilment of prophecy was a worry to the Fathers. Any evidence that St. John's death had been a martyrdom would have been eagerly grasped. As regards (ii) and (iii) it is enough to say that Papias cannot have said any such thing. Irenaeus studied Papias and esteemed him highly, yet he says that John lived until the time of Trajan and that Papias himself was John's disciple. Eusebius also studied Papias and esteemed him not at all, but he was concerned to prove that Irenaeus had been wrong in saying that he was John's disciple, and for that purpose he could have had no better text than this one, if it had been there. As for martyrologies, they often include persons who were not martyrs (this Syrian one even includes the heresiarch Arius).

Notice that all this evidence implies that John was not merely martyred, but martyred along with his brother, in A.D. 44. But Acts makes no mention of this, and St. Paul (Gal. ii. 7) testifies that St. John was still alive some years later. Yet suppose this be admitted, may not John have been martyred later? Perhaps along with James the Just in A.D. 62? The answer must be negative for the reason given above. If there was any good evi-

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dence, in Papias or elsewhere, that John had died while Papias was still in his cradle, we may be sure that Eusebius would have pounced on it. It would never have occurred to him that such evidence might cast doubt on the authenticity of the fourth Gospel, so he would have had no motive for suppressing it. There is no hint in any writer of the second, third or fourth centuries that John ever died a martyr's death. The fact was an awkward one, in view of the prophecy, but that it was a fact was undoubted.

Against these early and reliable witnesses the critics bring a ninth-century monk and Philip of Side who, even in this one sentence, demonstrates his own ignorance. For John was never called 'the Divine' in Papias's day, nor was James removed by the Jews but by Herod. It was the other James who was murdered by the Jews. I find it difficult to avoid the conclusion that critics who thus weigh evidence that is late and bad against evidence that is early and good, and then pronounce themselves convinced by the former, are victims of wishful thinking. The fact that most modern scholars have abandoned this attitude is more creditable to biblical scholarship than was their predecessors' tendency to adopt it.

To sum up, unless we are prepared to admit an unparalleled set of coincidences, there is no occasion to imagine the co-existence of two Johns. The motive which impelled some people in the Eastern Church to do so—the hope of excluding the Apocalypse from the canon—no longer operates, for the canon which has stood for over a thousand years is not likely to be altered now. We may conclude, therefore, that John the Presbyter, John the Evangelist and John the Divine (as the

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Apocalyptist came to be called) were all one and the same person. That he was also John the son of Zebedee, the beloved disciple, cannot be denied without some dubious manipulation of the evidence and the erection of a highly improbable character to take his place on the stage as soon as he has been hustled into a martyr's grave of which the second-century writers were unaccountably ignorant. It is therefore necessary to provide some other explanation of the stylistic differences between Gospel and Apocalypse, and this is no insuperable task, as we have seen.

The plain fact is that whatever difficulties there may be in accepting the traditional account, they are nothing to the difficulties which are involved in any alternative hypothesis. I have only troubled to consider, above, such hypotheses as seem to me worth considering. For the sake of completeness, however, some others should perhaps be briefly mentioned. First, then, the theory of downright forgery. This, it would seem, was the only one which occurred to anybody in the second century, and that is a strong point in its favour. A contemporary or nearly contemporary critic possesses so much knowledge of the innumerable trifles which go to make up the 'life of an age' that his opinion is always worth considering. Just as many moderns have attempted to rationalize the story of Christ's resurrection without producing any theory so probable as that propounded by contemporary Jews (that the disciples had stolen and hidden the body), so the opinion of Caius, that the fourth Gospel was a forgery, has more probability than most theories propounded nowadays. We know that such forgeries were not uncommon. We possess fragments of pseudonymous gospels, pseudonymous

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epistles, bogus apocalypses. Such frauds certainly did occur. There is, moreover, such a thing as a pious fraud. But is there, was there ever such a thing as a saintly fraud? Can we really believe that a character of such obvious holiness and simplicity as the fourth evangelist could stoop to that sort of deception? And what was his motive? We know the motives of the other apocryphal writers. They had a doctrinal axe to grind. They were heretics, concocting gospels to suit their heresies. But what axe can we detect in St. John's hands? His orthodoxy is massive, monumental.

Orthodox Christianity is a narrow ridge between two gulfs of error. On the one hand lie such heresies as Gnosticism, Catharism, Puritanism—in fact that notion, Hydra-headed, which condemns the body, the material universe, Nature and the natural appetites as evil in themselves, and asserts that only Mind and Spirit are godlike. On the other hand lie those opposite falsehoods, propounded by Pelagius or Rousseau and so widely held to-day, that the 'natural man' is naturally good; that wickedness is the result of restraint and discipline, that if we all did just as we liked upon all occasions we should all be virtuous and happy. Using the images of Genesis, we may say that both sets of heretics deny the fall of Adam, one set maintaining that Adam is already so low that there is nowhere for him to fall to, the other asserting on the contrary that he has always been, and still is, steadily rising and altogether Godlike in himself.

Judaism denied both doctrines. In the beginning God created the earth and saw that it was good. Evil came in only when disobedience came in. There is nothing wrong with Man's appetites but his own failure to control them. Christianity went farther than this. It affirmed



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that God, who *made* the material universe, entered right into it, became part of it, made even death and suffering divine things. Now in the first century it was the Gnostic, Docetic, the-flesh-is-evil type of heresy which predominated, and is there any more emphatic witness against it than the fourth evangelist? If orthodoxy be likened to a ridge, St. John stands on a pinnacle of the ridge. So much for the idea that he had an heretical axe to grind.

Then there have been various theories of multiple authorship, of a 'witness' and an 'evangelist' and a 'redactor' who between them, over a period of time, produced the fourth Gospel. If proved instances of multiple authorship were common, or if there were strong internal evidence to suggest that this book was a collection or 'corpus' of writings, like the works of Hippocrates, there might be something to be said for this view. But the facts are otherwise, and the methods of research appropriate to a study of the Pentateuch break down when applied to the New Testament. Doubtless there was a Witness whose knowledge was used by an Evangelist, and the resultant work was gone over by a Reviser and an Interpolator. But all these people lived inside one human body. I can assure the reader that this present work was produced by just such a team, but all the members of the team were myself. The more fantastic suggestions on these lines which used to be made (mainly in Germany), and which involved incredibly complex patterns of interlocked sources and editors, are seldom even discussed nowadays, but they do serve as awful examples of what can happen when an over-zealous scholar treats his subject-matter on the lines of a chess-problem or a mathematical puzzle,

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without reference to the ways in which real people behave in the real world. If there were no other objection to such theories there would always be this one—that if the truth were really so complicated it is inconceivable that any modern investigator could hope to unscramble the omelette.

There is, however, one direction in which some editorial manipulation may legitimately be suspected. I mentioned in Chapter III that the Gospel seems in some ways to be badly put together, and that some scholars have suggested that the sequence of events and speeches in the book as we have it is not that originally intended by its author. The most conspicuous example of this is the violent leap from Jerusalem to Galilee at the end of chap. v, but there are other jolts that seem suspicious. Why does Nicodemus have to come by night to visit Jesus, and why does he refer to miracles which have not, so far as the evangelist has informed us, taken place? Why, at chap. xii. 34, do the Jews say 'What dost thou mean by saying that the Son of Man must be lifted up?' Jesus had not, in the preceding verses, referred to any such thing. The words would seem more appropriate after viii. 28. Again at xvi. 5 our Lord says: 'None of you asketh me, whither goest thou?' but at xiii. 6 St. Peter had in fact asked that very question. Any one of these instances could no doubt be explained in one way or another, but their cumulative effect is considerable, and the urge to reach for scissors and paste is understandable. The next chapter, accordingly, is devoted to a brief discussion of this question.

## VIII

# SUGGESTED REARRANGEMENTS

**T**here is no gross improbability in the suggestion that St. John's Gospel may have become disarranged. There are instances of a similar fate overtaking other ancient books. But that it happened, if at all, at a very early stage in the textual history may be taken as certain. Except for one minor variation in the Sinaitic Syriac (mentioned in a note to Chapter II), the MS evidence is quite unanimous. Therefore if we decide to attempt a rearrangement of the Gospel we are forced to begin by disregarding all the textual evidence. And this is an uncomfortable thing to do, for it leaves us with no criterion but our own individual opinion as to the 'right' order, and one man's guess is as good as the next man's.

If, however, we admit that the traditional order is wrong (leaving aside for the moment what we mean by 'wrong') it becomes necessary as a first step to imagine ways in which it became so, and this exercise

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does in itself impose some discipline upon us and set some limits to the scope of our conjectures. There are two possibilities—accident or design. The papyrus sheets on which the Gospel was written may have become disordered before being pasted together to form a roll, and whoever did assemble them may have blundered. Or, somebody with scissors and paste may have deliberately cut up and reassembled the book for reasons of his own. There are two drawbacks to the latter suggestion. Firstly it is not easy to imagine who would do such a thing, or why. If his object was to harmonize the fourth Gospel with the others we can only say that he was singularly unsuccessful, and the only sort of editor we can suppose to have been in a position to undertake such a task would have been, in all likelihood, an Ephesian and a follower of John who would have been more likely to alter the synoptists to agree with John than to alter his own master's work to agree with theirs. Such editorial work would have been a fairly laborious task, and we need to attribute a fairly strong motive to the person we suppose to have done it. The hypothesis, in fact, seems to be unlikely in itself. The second objection to this theory is, that if it be true it leaves no more to be said. How can we hope to reverse the process, to undo the work of the supposed editor, unless we know a great deal about his motives and methods? The field of conjecture is open unto infinity and we are left without chart or compass.

More probable in itself, and certainly more productive of results, is the hypothesis of accident. The unanimity of the MSS makes it virtually certain that the disarrangement must have taken place before any considerable multiplication of copies had occurred, in fact

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almost before the book had left St. John's own study, and if the Gospel was published after, or only just before, its author's death it is easy to imagine that some secretary or 'literary executor' may have dropped the MS and reassembled it by the light of nature. Those who take this view naturally pounce upon the *pericope adulterae*. If the same accident which produced the disarrangement also caused the insertion of this narrative into the text it becomes reasonable to suppose that both Gospel and *pericope* were written on sheets of the same size and that we can therefore infer the approximate number of words in each column of the original MS of the Gospel. Then, by dividing the book into sections of approximately that length, we can reshuffle the pages until the order becomes more satisfactory. There are, however, three objections to this theory.

(i) If the disarrangement of the Gospel and the insertion of this *pericope* were due to the same cause, why are the MSS unanimous for the traditional order but far from unanimous regarding the *pericope*? The textual evidence suggests that the *pericope adulterae* was inserted after a considerable multiplication of copies had taken place. (ii) The text of the *pericope* itself contains a rather large number of variant readings, so that the number of words and letters contained in the original form of it can only be assessed very approximately. (iii) the most probable theory to account for its presence in the Gospel is that of deliberate interpolation. Eusebius tells us that Papias reported a story, also found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews, about a woman accused of many sins before the Lord. This story sounds very like the one in question, the mention of 'many sins' being perhaps due to the fact that Eusebius had in mind the

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Hebraic Gospel version of the story rather than that of Papias. Now Papias was generally believed to have been a 'hearer of John', and it would therefore be natural to suppose that any such anecdote reported by him was derived from St. John. It has already been mentioned, too, that a certain vein of ironical humour in the story does suggest the voice, if not the pen, of the fourth evangelist. Hence it is inserted into St. John's Gospel, first as a supplement (as in some 'Caesarean' and Armenian MSS) and then into the body of the text. But if this account of the origin of the interpolation be anything like the truth, then the *pericope* can afford no clue to the number of words in a column of the Gospel, for the interpolation was deliberate and the disarrangement was accidental.

Contrasted with all the foregoing suggestions is that of, for example, Harnack who simply supposed that any seeming disorder in the Gospel is merely the disorder inherent in any uncompleted or unrevised MS. 'When more closely examined (he wrote in *Erforschtes und Erlebtes*) the work exhibits manifold irregularities which show that it still required a final revision.' Frankly, this is precisely the impression which the Gospel does convey. No book (I suppose) is ever written down exactly in the order in which it finally appears. No author does, as Alice was bidden to do by the King of Hearts, 'begin at the beginning, go on until you come to the end. Then stop.' If the Gospel did not, in fact, receive a thorough and efficient revision by its author before its publication many *non sequiturs* are accounted for. So far from being due to the clumsiness of an editor they are due to the total absence of any editor at all.

As for the reasons which have led to a suspicion of

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some primitive disarrangement, most of these have already been mentioned in earlier chapters, and we may also recall St. John's lack of precedents and the difficulty of grouping his material under chronological, logical or imaginative chapter-headings without doing excessive violence to historical truth. It is easy enough to see, for example, that the Last Discourse may represent a 'logical' grouping—the sermon to the disciples after Judas had gone out into the night and the Son of Man was glorified in his infant Church. But what of the interview with Nicodemus? This would seem, on the face of it, to belong to a later period than the first Passover, to a time, in fact, when Jesus' fame as a miracle-worker and his unpopularity with the Sanhedrim had had time to develop. Is it placed where it is because, being concerned with Baptism, it fits better in association with our Lord's own baptism, with the marriage at Cana and with the tale of the Samaritan woman at the well? The symbolism of water is very prominent in these early chapters of the Gospel.

It is the inevitable uncertainty about the answer to these questions which renders all attempts at rearranging the Gospel somewhat futile. We may, indeed, satisfy ourselves that we have arranged it in a *better* order, but how can we be sure that we have set it in the *right* order when we do not know what were St. John's own views upon such 'rightness'? Some guesses are, no doubt, better than others, but unless we know whether chronological accuracy, logical interconnection or symbolical effectiveness were the dominant considerations in the author's mind it would seem to be a hopeless task to make guesses in the matter at all.

Since, however, the question is of some interest and

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has been tackled by several scholars, I append a table showing some of the rearrangements that have been suggested. It calls, perhaps, for a few words of explanation. I have divided the Gospel into sections, numbered consecutively in column 1, with the nature of their contents briefly indicated in column 2. Column 3 gives the usual chapter and verse numbers, and the numbers in the remaining columns (under the name of the scholar concerned) all refer to those in column 1. Thus F. R. Hoare places the journey through Samaria—No. 10 in column 1—between the prologue (No. 1) and the marriage at Cana (No. 2). Tatian, with Warburton Lewis and Moffatt, places section 7 (the Baptist's second testimony) immediately after section 2 (the marriage at Cana). Tatian's order is included as a matter of interest rather than for any value it may have. His motive was to harmonize all four Gospels, not to rearrange one of them, and we cannot infer that Tatian's text of St. John differed in its arrangement from our own. The antiquity of his resultant Life of Christ (second half of the second century) is no measure of its value compared with modern works of the same kind. It may, however, be significant that neither he nor his contemporaries saw any objection in principle to his taking liberties with the order of events in the fourth Gospel.



# SUGGESTED REARRANGEMENTS

No.	Content	Received Text	Tatian	Bernard	Warburton Lewis	Moffatt	MacGregor	Hours
1	Prologue, etc.	i. 1-51	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	Marriage at Cana	ii. 1-12	2	2	2	2	2	10
3	Cleansing of Temple	ii. 13-23	7	3	7	7	3	2
4	He knew what was in men	ii. 24-25	8	4	3	3	4	3
5	Nicodemus	iii. 1-13	9	5	4	4	5	4
6	Darkness and light	iii. 14-21	11	6	5	5	8	5
7	John again testifies	iii. 22-30	4	8	6	6	7	6
8	'He that cometh from above is above all'	iii. 31-36	13	7	8	8	9	7
9	Return to Galilee	iv. 1-3a	10	9	9	9	10	8
10	The Samaritan woman	iv. 3b-43	12	10	10	10	11	9
11	Heals officer's son	iv. 44-54	14	11	11	11	13	11
12	The pool of Bethesda	v. 1-47	15	13	13	12	12	12
13	Feeding the 5,000	vi. 1-71	16	12	12	15	15	15
14	'Go up to Judea'	vii. 1-14	3	15	15	13	21	13
15	'Why do you design to kill me?'	vii. 15-24	5	14	21	14	14	14
16	'You know me, and whence I am.'	vii. 25-31	6	16	14	16	16	16
17	'Whither I go you cannot come.'	vii. 32-36	17	17	16	17	17	17
18	A Christ from Galilee?	vii. 37-44	18	18	17	18	22	18
19	Nicodemus remonstrates	vii. 45-52	19	19	18	19	23	19
20	The adulteress	vii. 53-viii. 11	—	—	—	—	—	21
21	The light of the world	viii. 12-20	21	21	19	21	19	22
22	'When you have lifted up the Son of Man.'	viii. 21-28a	22	22	22	22	18	38
23	'Before Abraham was, I Am.'	viii. 28b-59	23	23	23	23	24	39
24	The man born blind	ix. 1-41	24	24	24	24	26	40
25	The door. The shepherd	x. 1-18	25	26	26	26	25	41
26	The Dedication	x. 19-29	26	25	25	25	27	23
27	'I am the Son of God.'	x. 30-39	27	27	27	27	28	24
28	Return to the Jordan	x. 40-42	28	28	28	28	29	26
29	Death of Lazarus	xi. 1-17	29	29	29	29	31	27
30	Bethany	xi. 18-19	30	30	30	31	30	28
31	Meets Martha and Mary	xi. 20-30	31	31	31	30	32	29
32	Mary reproaches Jesus	xi. 31-33	32	32	32	32	33	30

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No.	Content	Received Text	Tatian	Bernard	Warburton Lewis	Moffatt	MacGregor	Hours
33	Lazarus restored. Plot of the priests	xi. 34-57	33	33	33	33	34	31
34	Supper at Bethany	xii. 1-2	34	34	34	34	35	32
35	Palm Sunday	xii. 3-23a	35 <sup>a</sup>	35	35	35	36	36
36	'Father, save me from this hour.'	xii. 23b-32	36	36	36	36	6a	37
37	'Signifying what death he should die.'	xii. 33	37	37	37	37	38	33
38	Who is this Son of Man?	xii. 34	38	38	38	38	6b	34
39	Walk in the light	xii. 35-36a	39	39	39	39	39	35
40	Isaiah's prophecy	xii. 36b-43	41	41	40	41	41	25
41	A saviour, not a judge	xii. 44-50	40	40	41	40	40	20
42	Washing of the feet	xiii. 1-19	42	42	42	42	42	42
43	'One will betray me.'	xiii. 20-31a	43	43	43	43	43	49
44	'Thou wilt deny me thrice.'	xiii. 31b-38	44	48	48	48	44	50
45	The discourse in the upper room and Jesus' prayer	xiv. 1-14	45	49	49	49	48	43
46		xiv. 15-24a	46	50	50	50	49	44
47		xiv. 24b-31	47	51	51	51	50	45
48		xv. 1-16	48	52	52	52	51	52
49		xv. 17-27	49	53	53	53	52	46
50		xvi. 1-4a	50	44	44	44	53	51
51		xvi. 4b-15a	51	45	45	45	45	47
52		xvi. 15b-23	52	46	46	46	46	48
53		xvi. 24-33	53	47	47	47	47	53
54		xvii. 1-26	54	54	54	54	54	54
55	Arrest. Annas.	xviii. 1-14	55	55	55	55	55	55
56	Peter's first denial	xviii. 15-18	56	56	56	57	56 <sup>a</sup>	56
57	Jesus questioned	xviii. 19-24	57	57	57	56	57	57
58	Peter's denials	xviii. 25-40	58	58	58	58	58	58

From this point onward all the above-mentioned critics concur in the order of events as related in the received text.

<sup>a</sup> Moffatt's order here is: xi. 1, 2, 5, 3, 4, 6-17.

<sup>a</sup> Tatian's order here is: xii. 9-11, 3, 8, 16, 12-36a.

<sup>a</sup> MacGregor regards xviii. 13b-18 and 24-7 as interpolations and xii. 33 as a gloss.

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### NOTES

The story of the adulteress is omitted by all except Hoare.

The works concerned are: Tatian, *Diatessaron*; Bernard, *International Critical Commentary*; F. Warburton Lewis, *The Interpreter*; Moffatt's translation of the New Testament; MacGregor, *Moffat New Testament Commentary*; F. R. Hoare, *The Original Order of St. John's Gospel*. See also W. F. Howard, *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism*, pp. 125 ff. and appendix D.

## IX

### CONCLUSION

When faced with a fanatical Baconian, or a man with some new theory about Homer, the average intelligent person feels inclined to ask: 'What of it? Does it really matter who "Shakespeare" was or how many poets were "Homer"? It is the work that is important, not the worker.' So in this case it may reasonably be asked whether it matters who wrote 'St. John' when even the author himself seems to have considered this of secondary importance. There are, however, two reasons why the identity of this particular author does matter. The first is, that the book is an historical document, and the authorship of any such document is always of importance to the historian. If Caesar's *Commentaries*, for instance, were proved to have been written by someone who never set foot outside of Rome throughout the period of the campaigns this fact would have an important bearing upon the reliability of the book as an historical source. It might not, indeed, invalidate its evidence. On the contrary, it might remove any suspicion that 'Caesar' had represented his own doings in too favourable a light. But it would mean that

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the book would have to be treated quite differently and its evidence assessed from quite a different point of view.

So with the fourth Gospel. If its author was a genuine eye-witness we may, indeed, suspect him if we will of misrepresentation, self-deception, distortion or what-not, but we cannot accuse him of sheer ignorance. If on the other hand he was not an eye-witness we must begin to weigh his probable sources of information and to estimate the possible ways in which such information may have become modified in passing through the filter of his mind and character.

The second reason is, that our estimate of that very mind and character must be enormously influenced by our opinion of his identity. Such features of his book as the total omission of all reference to James and John, the use of the phrase 'the disciple whom Jesus loved', the evident intention of representing himself to have been an eye-witness, must obviously have a crucial effect on our estimate of the man himself if we conclude that, in point of fact, his claim to be an eye-witness was false. In fact, a fourth evangelist who was not St. John the Apostle is an utterly different—almost a diametrically opposite—character from a fourth evangelist who was St. John the Apostle. It follows that whereas we can cheerfully ignore the identity of the man who wrote *Hamlet* in a simple enjoyment of his work, we cannot enjoy nor even understand the work of the fourth evangelist unless we have reached firm conclusions about his identity.

In the preceding chapters the evidence for his identity has been reviewed. We have seen that the book was published in the first century and accorded a position of high authority in the early decades of the second.

#### CONCLUSION

In the latter part of that century we find men of probity and intelligence asserting that its author was St. John the Apostle, apparently in contradiction of some who had denied this. Their very denial testifies to the fact that at this time, within a lifetime of the date of publication, the opinion was generally held throughout the Church that St. John was in fact its author. Also, the denial came from persons whose motives were in no sense those of scientific historians but merely those of irritated—and not too intelligent—theologians. The opinion of informed and respectable men in the second century was, in fact, for the Apostolic authorship, and we have no reason to suppose that it was unduly biased opinion, since it made no attempt to assign Apostolic authorship to Mark and Luke. This external evidence is good, and would need very cogent internal evidence to upset it.

When we turned to the internal evidence we found, first, a certificate in the book identifying its author with a certain 'beloved disciple' and we found that it was not merely possible but entirely natural to identify this beloved disciple with St. John. We also found that the author was a Jew, probably a Palestinian, certainly a man of great authority in the Church. When comparing his work with that of the synoptists we found him extremely self-confident and independent in his approach. We found him a man who seems to say, 'La tradition, c'est moi'. Where he disagrees with his predecessors in matters of historical detail we found good reasons to suppose that he was justified. In all this there is nothing tending to contradict the external evidence and much which tends to support it. In fact the statement that St. John the Apostle wrote the fourth Gospel is

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about as well substantiated as any other statement in any textbook of ancient history. It is safe to say that if the question were an ordinary, commonplace matter of history—like, say, the parentage of Oliver Cromwell—none but a few cranks would be disposed to contradict the tradition.

Why, then, are there found so many honest, learned and intelligent men who do contradict the tradition? In part, no doubt, the reason is that where religion is concerned we are all of us inclined to be cranks; but another reason is that the whole subject has for a century been the scene of fierce controversy, and a great deal of the dust has not yet settled. It is worth while to re-read Bishop Lightfoot's famous *Essays on the Work entitled 'Supernatural Religion'* (London, 1889). They reveal in a sufficiently striking manner how much confusion could be stirred up by an anonymous writer who possessed very meagre scholastic qualifications and allowed his own prejudices to carry him up to and beyond the limits of honesty. In such a smoke-laden atmosphere it is small wonder if even clear-sighted men should have become confused and 'medio tutissimus ibis' has ever been a favourite English motto. Moreover there is in all ages an itch to 'reconcile Christianity with Contemporary Thought'. The contemporary thought in question naturally varies from one century to another. In St. John's own time the itch was towards gnosticism, and the awkward thing about Christianity was its insistence that Jesus was a man, of flesh and blood, who had really suffered and died. In our own fathers' time the itch was a contrary one, towards materialism, and the awkward thing about Christianity was its insistence that Jesus was God, who had

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really risen from death. To-day there is a turning-away from materialism towards mysticism, and we may yet see the gnostics return. But whatever form it takes, the itch is always there. Contemporary Thought always over-emphasizes some aspect of the truth, depending upon the view it takes of what constitutes reality, and which sorts of human experience best put a man in touch with that reality. At one time those things will be thought most real which we can touch and see. At another, these will seem the least real of all things, belonging as they do to a world of change and decay, whereas true reality is found in a realm of abiding 'forms' or 'ideas' which are the objects of intellectual, not of sensible, experience. At another time (such as the last century) reality is found in a sort of combination of these two, in phenomena viewed in the light of intellectual concepts and controlled and interpreted by them—the subject-matter, in fact, of the empirical sciences. At yet other times it is the spiritual, religious experiences of men which seem to bring them into closest touch with reality and truth; at others it may be in social life, or tribal life, or citizenship, or family life, or aesthetic experience, or in any other of man's relations with his environment that he feels himself most truly real. Now each of these has its place in Christianity, but Christianity also refuses to over-stress any one of them to the exclusion of the rest. Consequently any given Spirit of the Age is likely to find some aspect of Christianity uncomfortable. Even the most strictly orthodox Doctors of the Church tend in different ages to exalt certain articles of the Faith and to keep rather quiet about others, while those in whom the contemporary spirit works most strongly will burst the barriers of orthodoxy



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altogether. The Abbé Loisy suffered excommunication for the sake of opinions which to-day seem pathetically out of date, but almost everyone, to some extent, experiences this desire to retain the name of Christian while continuing to 'keep abreast of Modern Thought'.

The attempt may as well be abandoned as hopeless. Christianity never has been in close touch with Modern Thought save at certain rare periods when the leaders of thought happened also to be leaders of Christianity. Nor can one single Gospel be set apart as representing a more authentic 'Jesus of History' than the others. Sort and sift the evidence how we will, we can never distinguish an authentic 'Jesus of History' other than the one interpreted to us by the writers of the New Testament. And the interpretation which they offer is always and everywhere the same—that Jesus was the Christ foretold by the Prophets, that all the things which he said and did were in a perfectly literal sense the words and acts of God, and that the most conspicuously divine and Godlike action of his life was, of all things, his degraded and humiliating death. This is the 'scandal of the Cross'—foolishness to Greeks, a stumbling-block to Jews. There is no getting round it. The New Testament writers are unanimous. We must accept or reject their interpretation *en bloc*. We cannot pick and choose.

It is for this reason that we often find the sanest and most logical judgements either among the strictly orthodox or among those who, like Bernard Shaw, most completely and dispassionately reject the claims of Christianity altogether. In others, who attempt some compromise between modernism and the tradition, there is always an element of schizophrenia and, in their religion, a dangerous streak of superstition. For it is

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superstition to build churches and pay divine honours to a person whom you believe to have been merely a man, like Socrates or Confucius. It is superstition—or hypocrisy—to recite the Apostles' Creed or the *Quicunque vult* if you do not really believe it. Christianity need not be reconciled with the Spirit of the Age—of any Age. It need not be reconciled even with rationalism as such. But if it cannot be reconciled with reason as such it had much better be abandoned altogether.

I believe, myself, that it can be so reconciled. I believe that even its highest mysteries, though certainly beyond the scope of reason, are in no sense contrary to reason. I believe that the articles of the Christian creed do not mean less than they say but that they mean more. But to develop this theme at length would be an undertaking too vast for my present purpose and also quite beyond my power. Writers far better qualified than I have written, are writing and, please God, always will write treatises to prove that the Church and human reason, if properly understood and followed, are both of them infallible and cannot therefore lead us in opposite directions. But either of them, if improperly understood and indiscreetly followed, may lead us into idolatry. The idols of to-day are the Abstract Nouns—Progress, Science, The State, The Party, The Common Man, The So-and-so Way of Life, and all the buzzing hive of -isms and -ations and -alities. All good and useful in their place, no doubt, but not to be set up as images of gold whose height is three-score cubits, nor worshipped to the sound of the sackbut and psaltery—not even when they promise us all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. . . . 'For it is written, The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.'

## APPENDIX A

# THE GOSPELS OF PETER AND PAUL

(*Note.* As Torrey and de Zwaan have shown, the speeches of St. Peter reported in the Acts of the Apostles have a strongly Aramaic flavour which suggests that St. Luke, when writing the Acts, was drawing upon an early Palestinian source. They may therefore be distinguished from St. Luke's own Gospel and be called, without impropriety, the 'Gospel of Peter'.) The English, both here and in Appendix B, is from the Knox version, by permission of H. E. The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and of Messrs. Burns, Oats and Washbourne Ltd.

**M**en of Israel, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man duly accredited to you from God; such were the miracles and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves well know. This man you have put to death; by God's fixed design and foreknowledge, he was betrayed to you, and you, through the hands of sinful men, have cruelly murdered him. But God raised him up again, releasing him from the pangs of death; it was impossible that death should have the mastery over him. It is in his person that David says, Always I can keep the Lord within sight; always he is at my right hand, to make me stand firm. So there is gladness in my heart and rejoicing

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ing on my lips; my body, too, shall rest in confidence that thou wilt not leave my soul in the place of death, or allow thy faithful servant to see corruption. Thou hast shown me the way of life; thou wilt make me full of gladness in thy presence. My brethren, I can say this to you about the patriarch David without fear of contradiction, that he did die, and was buried, and his tomb is among us to this day. But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised him on oath that he would set the sons of his body upon his throne; it was of the Christ he said, foreseeing his resurrection, that he was not left in the place of death, and that his body did not see corruption. God, then, has raised up this man, Jesus, from the dead; we are all witnesses of it. And now, exalted at God's right hand, he has claimed from his Father his promise to bestow the Holy Spirit; and he has poured out that Spirit, as you can see and hear for yourselves. David never went up to heaven, and yet David has told us, The Lord said to my Master, Sit on my right hand, while I make thy enemies a footstool under thy feet. Let it be known, then, beyond doubt, to all the house of Israel, that God has made him Master and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. (Acts ii. 22-36. Verse 42 gives a hint of the first Christian liturgy: 'They occupied themselves continually with the Apostles' teaching, their fellowship in the breaking of bread, and the fixed times of prayer'.)

St. Peter heals the cripple and then speaks: Men of Israel, why does this astonish you? Why do you fasten your eyes upon us, as if we had enabled him to walk through some power or virtue of our own? It is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fore-

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fathers, who has thus brought honour to his Son Jesus: You gave him up, and disowned him in the presence of Pilate, when Pilate's voice was for setting him free. You disowned the holy, the just, and asked for the pardon of a murderer, while you killed the author of life. But God has raised him up again from the dead, and we are here to witness of it. . . . Come then, brethren, I know that you, like your rulers, acted in ignorance; but God has fulfilled in this way what was foretold by all the prophets about the sufferings of his Christ. (Acts iii. 12-18.)

I see clearly enough (said Peter) that God makes no distinction between man and man; he welcomes anybody, whatever his race, who fears him and does what piety demands. God has sent his word to the sons of Israel, giving them news of peace, through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You have heard the story, a story which ran through the whole of Judea, though it began in Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed; about Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, so that he went about doing good, and curing all those who were under the devil's tyranny, with God at his side. We are witnesses of all that he did in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem. And they killed him, hanging him on a gibbet; but on the third day God raised him up again, and granted the clear sight of him, not to the people at large, but to us, the witnesses whom God had appointed beforehand; we ate and drank in his company after his rising from the dead. And he gave us a commission to preach to the people, and to bear witness that he, and none other, has been chosen by God to judge the living and the dead. All the prophets bear him this testimony,

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that everyone who has faith in him is to find remission of sins through his name. (Acts x. 34-43.)

#### ST. PAUL

There is only one God, and only one mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, who is a man, like them, and gave himself as a ransom for them all. (1 Tim. ii. 5.)

In the Son of God we find the redemption that sets us free from our sins. He is the true likeness of the God we cannot see; his is that first birth which precedes every act of creation. Yes, in him all created things took their being, heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible; what are thrones and dominions, what are principdoms and powers? They were all created through him and in him; he takes precedency of all, and in him all subsist. He too is that head whose body is the Church; it begins with him, since his was the first birth out of death; thus in every way the primacy was to become his. It was God's good pleasure to let all completeness dwell in him, and through him to win back all things, whether on earth or in heaven, into union with himself, making peace with them through his blood, shed on the cross.

Him, then, we proclaim, warning every human being and instructing every human being as wisely as we may, so as to exhibit every human being perfect in Christ Jesus. (Col. i. 14-20, 28.)

The chief message I handed on to you, as it was handed on to me, was that Christ, as the Scriptures had foretold, died for our sins; that he was buried, and then, as the Scriptures had foretold, rose again on the third

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day. That he was seen by Cephas, then by the eleven apostles, and afterwards by more than five hundred brethren at once, most of whom are alive at this day, though some have gone to their rest. Then he was seen by James, then by all the apostles, and last of all, I too saw him, like the last child that comes to birth unexpectedly. . . .

That is our preaching, mine or theirs as you will; that is the faith that has come to you. (1 Cor. xv, 3-8, 11.)

Yours is to be the same mind which Christ Jesus shewed. His nature is from the first, divine, and yet he did not see, in the rank of Godhead, a prize to be coveted; he dispossessed himself, and took the nature of a slave, fashioned in the likeness of men, and presenting himself to us in human form; and then he lowered his own dignity, accepted an obedience which brought him to death, death on a cross. That is why God has raised him to such a height, given him that name which is greater than any other name; so that everything in heaven and on earth and under the earth must bend the knee before the name of Jesus, and every tongue must confess Jesus Christ as the Lord, dwelling in the glory of God the Father. (Phil. ii. 5-11.)

No question of it, it is a great mystery we worship. Revelation made in human nature, justification won in the realm of the spirit; a vision seen by angels, a mystery preached to the gentiles; Christ in this world, accepted by faith; Christ, on high, taken up into glory. (1 Tim. iii. 16.)

And here is a warning for you. I can give you no

#### APPENDIX A

praise for holding your assemblies in a way that does harm, not good.

The tradition which I received from the Lord, and handed on to you, is that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was being betrayed, took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and said: This is my body, given up for you. Do this for a commemoration of me. And so with the cup, when supper was ended, This cup, he said, is the new testament, in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, for a commemoration of me. So it is the Lord's death that you are heralding, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, until he comes; and therefore, if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, he will be held to account for the Lord's body and blood. A man must examine himself first, and then eat of that bread and drink of that cup; he is eating and drinking damnation to himself if he eats and drinks unworthily, not recognizing the Lord's body for what it is. (1 Cor. xi. 17, 23-9).



## APPENDIX B

### THE APOSTLE JOHN IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

*Matthew*

Then he went further on and saw two others that were brethren, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in the boat with their father Zebedee repairing their nets, and he called them to him; whereupon they dropped the nets and left their father immediately, and followed him. (iv. 21)

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*Mark*

Then he went a little further, and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; these too were in their boat, repairing their nets; all at once he called them, and they, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, turned aside after him. (i. 19)

As soon as they left the synagogue they came into Simon and Andrew's house; James and John were with them. (i. 29)

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon, also called Peter, then his brother Andrew, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. . . . (x. 2)

*Luke*

So it was, too, with James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. But Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid; henceforth thou shalt be a fisher of men. So, when they had brought their boats to land, they left all and followed him. (v. 10)

He called his disciples to him, choosing out twelve of them; these he called his apostles. Their names were Simon, whom he also called Peter, his brother Andrew, James and John. (vi. 13)

*Matthew*

Six days afterwards Jesus took Peter and James and his brother John with him, and led them up on to a high mountain where they were alone. (xvii. 1)

*Mark*

And now he would not let anyone follow him, except Peter and James and James' brother John. (v. 37)

Six days afterwards Jesus took Peter and James and John with him, and led them up to a high mountain where they were alone by themselves. (ix. 2)

And John answered him, Master, we saw a man who does not follow in our company casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him to do it. But Jesus said, Forbid him no more. ix. 37.

*Luke*

When he reached the house he would not let anyone come in with him, except Peter and James and John. (viii. 51)

It was about a week after all this was said, that he took Peter and John and James with him, and went up on to the mountainside to pray. (ix. 28)

And John answered, Master, we saw a man who does not follow in our company casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him to do it. But Jesus said, Forbid him no more. (ix. 40)

But the Samaritans refused to receive him, because his journey was towards Jerusalem. When they found this, two of his disciples, James and John, asked him, Lord, wouldst thou have us bid fire come down from heaven, and consume them? But he turned and rebuked them. (ix. 53)

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Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee brought them to him, falling on her knees to make a request of him. And when he asked her, What is thy will? she said to him, Here are my two sons; grant that in thy kingdom one may take his place on thy right and the other on thy left. (xx. 20)

(Matt. xxiv. 3 mentions no names.)

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Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him and said, Master, we would have thee grant the request we are to make. . . . Grant that one of us may take his place on thy right and the other on thy left when thou art glorified. (x. 35)

When he was sitting down on Mount Olivet . . . Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him, now that they were alone: When will this be? (xiii. 3)

(xxvi. 17. 'The disciples.')

(xiv. 13. 'Two of the disciples.')

He said to his disciples, Sit down here while I go in thither and pray. But he took Peter and the sons of Zebedee with him. (xxvi. 36)

And he said to his disciples, Sit down here, while I go and pray. But he took Peter and James and John with him. (xiv. 32)

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Luke xxi. 6 mentions no names.)

Jesus sent Peter and John on an errand; Go and make ready for us, he said, to eat the paschal meal. (xxii. 8)

(xxii. 40)

BIOGRAPHICAL  
APPENDIX

To compile a complete Who's Who of all the scholars mentioned in this book would be well-nigh impossible. To single out a few may seem invidious. In making the following very short selection I have been governed partly by the eminence of the scholar in question, and partly by the extent to which I have cited his works. Under the heading 'publications' I have excluded, in order to save space, all works mentioned in the Index of references (q.v. p. 174). My sources have been standard works of reference, but these, I have found, do not always agree with one another in details. For this reason there may be a few errors in the particulars given. If so, I apologize and hope that they are not serious.

BAUER, W. (Luth), *b.* 1837. *Educ.* Marburg, Berlin and Strasburg; lecturer at Marburg, 1903; Prof. at Breslau (1913) and Göttingen (since 1916). Editor of

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*Theolog. Literaturzeitung*. Publications: *Die Oden Salomons*, *Griech.-Dt. Wörterbuch z. N.T.* (4th edn. 1949) and others.

BERNARD, J. H. (C. of I.), *b.* 1860, *d.* 1927. *Educ.* privately and at Trinity College, Dublin; Fellow and Tutor, Trinity Coll., 1884; ordained, 1886; D.D., 1892; Chaplain to the Lord Lieut. of Ireland, 1886-1902; Dean of St. Patrick's, 1902-11; Bp. of Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin, 1911-15; Archbp. of Dublin, 1915-19 Provost of Trinity Coll., 1919. Publications: *Kant's Critical Philosophy for English Readers*, 1889; *Kant's 'Critique of Judgement'* (transln.), 1892, and many other works on philosophical, biblical and devotional subjects.

BULTMANN, R. (Luth.), *b.* 1884. *Educ.* Oldenburg, Tübingen, Berlin, Marburg; lecturer at Marburg, 1912-16; successively Prof. of Theology at Breslau, 1916-20, Giessen, 1920-1, and Marburg since 1921; Hon. D.D., St. Andrews, 1935. Publications: *Die Gesch. der synopt. Tradition*, 1921 (2nd edn., 1931); *Jesus*, 1926 (2nd edn., 1929); *Glauben u. Verstehen*, 1933, etc.

CHAPMAN, DOM J. (Né Henry; C. of E.-R.C.), *b.* 1865, *d.* 1933. *Educ.* privately and at Christ Church, Oxford; ordained Deacon, 1889; received into the Catholic Church and entered Benedictine order (at Maredsous), 1890; ordained priest, 1895; at Erdington Abbey, 1895-1912; Temp. C.F., 1915-19; Abbot of Downside, 1929-33. Publications: *Matthew, Mark and Luke, The Four Gospels and Spiritual Letters* (all posthumous).

CHARNWOOD, LORD (G. R. Benson; C. of E.), *b.* 1864, *d.* 1945. *Educ.* Winchester and Balliol Coll., Oxford;

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M.P. (Lib.) for Woodstock, 1892-5; Mayor of Lichfield, 1909-11; *cr.* First Baron Charnwood, 1911. Publications: *Abraham Lincoln*, 1916, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 1923, *Tracks in the Snow*, 1927.

DODD, C. H. (Congreg.), *b.* 1884. *Educ.* Wrexham and University Coll., Oxford; Senior Demy, Magdalen Coll., 1907-11; ordained Minister of the Congregational Church, 1912; Yates lecturer in N.T. Studies, Mansfield Coll., 1915-30; University lecturer in N.T. Studies, 1927-30; Grinfield lecturer on the LXX, 1927-31; Rylands Prof. at Manchester, 1930-35; Shaffer lecturer, Yale, and Ingersoll lecturer, Harvard, 1935; Norris-Hulse Prof. at Cambridge, 1935-49; Olaus Petri lecturer at Uppsala, 1949. For his many publications see current 'Who's Who'.

HARNACK, A. VON (Luth.), *b.* 1851, *d.* 1930. *Educ.* Dorpat and Leipzig; Lecturer (1874) and Prof. (1876) at Leipzig, and successively Prof. at Giessen, 1879, Marburg, 1886, and Berlin, 1889-1924; Director of Prussian Nat. Library, 1905-21; President of Evangelical Congress, 1902-12; ennobled, 1914. Publications: *Lehrbuch der Dogmen-Gesch.* (4 vols., 1886-90), *Das Wesen des Christentums*, 1900, and many others (see his own *Erforschtes u. Erlebtes*, 1922).

HOWARD, W. F. (Wesl.), *b.* 1880. *Educ.* King Edward's School, Birmingham, and Manchester University; Tutor in N.T. language and literature at Handsworth Coll., B'ham, since 1919; Principal since 1943; Dale lecturer at Mansfield Coll., Oxford, 1940; President, Conference of Methodist Churches, 1944. Publications: Editor and joint author of Moulton's *Grammar of N.T. Greek*, vol. ii; *Christianity According to St. John*, etc.

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HÜGEL, BARON F. VON (R.C.), *b.* 1852, *d.* 1925. *Educ.* privately; settled in England, 1871, and devoted himself to Greek and Hebrew studies and historical criticism; a friend of Loisy (q.v.). Publications: *The Mystical Element in Religion*, 1908 (new edn. 1923) and other works on biblical and religious subjects.

KENYON, SIR FREDERICK (C. of E.), *b.* 1863. *Educ.* Winchester and New College, Oxford; Fellow of Magdalen, 1888; Assistant at the British Museum, 1889; Asst. Keeper of MSS, 1898-1909; Director and Principal Librarian, 1909-30; K.C.B., 1912; G.B.E., 1925; Presdt. of British Academy, 1917-21; F.S.A., 1926, Presdt., 1934-39; Presdt. of British School of Archaeology at Jerusalem since 1920; Hon. Fellow of numerous colleges and Presdt. of many learned societies. Publications include editions of Aristotle, Hyperides, Bacchylides, etc., and of Robert and Elizabeth Browning; also *Our Bible and the Ancient MSS.* (revised ed., 1939), *The Text of the Greek Bible*, 1937, etc.

LAGRANGE, PÈRE M.-J. (Né Albert; R.C.), *b.* 1855, *d.* 1938. *Educ.* Nantua (petit séminaire), Paris (Doctor of Law, 1879) and Vienna (oriental studies). Entered Dominican order, 1879; ordained priest, 1884; organized (1890) the *école biblique* at the convent of St. Stephen, Jerusalem, and became prior, 1892; founded the *Revue biblique*, 1892; Prof. and Master of Theology in the Dominican order, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, etc. Publications: *La Méthode Historique*, 1903; *Le Messianisme chez les Juifs*, 1909; and commentaries on *Judges* (1903), *Romans* (1916), *Galatians* (1918) and all four Gospels (1911-27).

LAKE, KIRSOPP (C. of E.), *b.* 1872, *d.* 1946. *Educ.* St.

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Paul's and Lincoln Coll., Oxford; D.D., St. Andrews, 1911; Prof. Ord. at Leyden, 1904-13; Prof. at Harvard, 1914-38 (of early Christian Literature, 1914-19, of Ecclesiastical History, 1919-32, and of History, 1932-8). Publications: *The Text of the New Testament*, 1898 (many edns.); *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection*, 1905; *The Beginnings of Christianity* (in collaboration with Foakes-Jackson, Cadbury and others), 1920-33; many collations of New Testament and other texts, etc.

LIGHTFOOT, J. B. (C. of E.), *b.* 1828, *d.* 1889. *Educ.* King Edward's School, Birmingham, and Trinity Coll., Cambridge; Fellow of Trinity, 1852; Tutor, 1857; Hulsean Prof., 1861; Canon of St. Paul's, 1871; Lady Margaret Prof. at Cambridge, 1875; Bp. of Durham, 1879; Editor of *Journal of Classical and Sacred Philology*, 1854-59. His publications include commentaries on *Galatians* (1865), *Philippians* (1868) and *Colossians* (1875).

LOISY, A. (ex-R.C.), *b.* 1857, *d.* 1940. *Educ.* St. Dizier and at the Grand Seminary, Châlons; ordained priest, 1879; Prof. of Holy Scripture at the Institute Catholique in Paris, 1889; became the leader of Modernism and was dismissed, 1893; Chaplain at Neuilly, 1894-1900; his *Quatrième Evangile* and *l'Evangile et l'Eglise* (an answer to Harnack's *Wesen des Christentums*) caused a storm and Loisy went into retirement, 1903-7; he refused to submit to the decree *Lamentabili*, 1907, and was excommunicated, 1908; Prof. of the History of Religion at the Collège de France, 1909; retired, 1927, but continued to write until his death. Publications: *La Naissance du Christianisme*, 1933; *Histoire et Mythe à propos de Jésus Christ*, 1938, etc.

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STREETER, B. H. (C. of E.), *b.* 1874, *d.* 1937. *Educ.* King's College School, London, and Queen's Coll., Oxford; Fellow of Pembroke Coll., 1899-1905; of Queen's Coll., 1905-33; Ireland Prof. of Exegesis at Oxford, 1932-33; Provost of Queen's Coll. 1933; Canon of Hereford, 1915-34; Hon. D.D. Edinburgh, Durham and Manchester. His many publications include a contribution to *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, 1911, and he edited and contributed to *Foundations*, 1912.<sup>1</sup>

ZAHN, T. (Luth.), *b.* 1838, *d.* 1933. *Educ.* Basle, Erlangen and Berlin; lecturer at Gottingen, 1865; successively Prof. at Gottingen, 1871, Kiel, 1877, Erlangen, 1878, Leipzig, 1888, and Erlangen again, 1891; edited in collaboration with Harnack and Gebhardt, the *Patrum Apostolicorum Opera*, 1876-78. His publications include seven vols. of *Forschungen zur Gesch. des N.T. Kanons*, 1881-1907, and *Gesch. des N.T. Kanons*, 2 vols., 1888-92.

<sup>1</sup> It was this book which inspired Ronald Knox, then Fellow and Chaplain of Trinity, to write *Absolute and Absofhell* which contains the following passage about Canon Streeter:

Say, what did STRATO in their company?  
Who, like a Leaven, gave his Tone to all  
'Mid prophet Bands an unsuspected Saul.  
For he, discerning with nice arguings  
'Twixt non-essential and essential Things,  
Himself believing, could no reason see  
Why any other should believe, but he.  
(Himself believing, as believing went  
In that wild Heyday of th' Establishment,  
When suave Politeness, temp'ring bigot Zeal,  
'Corrected' 'I believe' to 'One does feel'.)

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

TO provide anything approaching a full bibliography of this subject would be far beyond my power. Fortunately it is not necessary. Two books, admirable in themselves, are rendered doubly valuable by the excellent bibliographies which they contain. They are: *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism* by Dr. W. F. Howard (3rd edn., London, the Epworth Press, 1945) and *L'Evangile de Jean d'après les recherches récentes* by P. H. Menoud (Cahiers Théologiques de l'actualité protestante, No. 3. Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel, 1947). The former of these, in an appendix, also prints most of the ancient documents (from Papias, etc.) bearing on this question. Two further books can be confidently recommended by way of introduction to New Testament studies in general, namely L. de Grandmaison's *Jesus Christ* (English translation by B. Whelan, London, 1930) and *The Riddle of the New Testament* by Sir E. Hoskyns and N. Davey (London, Faber & Faber, 1931) *The Fourth Gospel* by the same

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authors (2nd edn., 1947) deals more with the theology of St. John, as also does *The Fourth Gospel, Its Significance and Environment* by R. H. Strachan (4th ed., London, 1943). Finally I should like to mention an admirable article by L. V. Lester-Garland in the *Hibbert Journal*, vol. 36, pp. 265 ff.

The principal modern commentaries are as follows:

- (i) In the International Critical Commentary (I.C.C.)
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  - (c) *Revelation* by R. H. Charles (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1920).
- (ii) In the Moffatt New Testament Commentary.
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- (iii) In Etudes Bibliques (E.B.).
  - (a) *L'Evangile selon S. Jean* by M.-J. Lagrange (3rd edn., Paris, 1927).
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 Prof. Dodd has also written an excellent paper on the historical and philosophical context of this Gospel in the B. of the J. R. Library, 1935, and in a broadcast (reprinted in the *Listener*, 2nd August 1951), he sums up the Graeco-Jewish character of St. John's Gospel as follows: 'The attempt to

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- analyse out passages which are Hellenistic and passages which are Hebraic in character, and to set them apart, does not meet with much success. Every part of the Gospel, almost every sentence, can be read from a Hellenistic angle and from a Jewish angle, and this two-fold vision gives a stereoscopic depth to its perspective.'
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The principal objection to the view that this writer was dependent on the fourth Gospel is that 'it is impossible to discover any reason why the author should have arbitrarily picked isolated sentences out of various passages of St. John and pieced them together into a mosaic'. Hard, perhaps, to discover any reason; less difficult to discover a precedent. The data of the synoptic problem show *either* that St. Luke 'picked isolated sentences' out of Mark and Matthew and used them in new contexts, *or else* that Matthew or Luke or both did the same thing with a common source 'Q'. In neither case is it easy to assign reasons for their doing so.

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